



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter  
In Favor of SB73- Criminal Law - Cannabis-Related Offenses - Civil  
Penalties  
Before the Judicial Proceedings Committee  
On February 1, 2023**

**SB73 will substitute civil penalties in place of criminal penalties for certain offenses relating to possessing, possessing with the intent to distribute, and cultivating and manufacturing cannabis related products; and other cannabis-related offenses.**

**With a growing understanding of cannabis, and the detrimental impact of criminal penalties for possession cannabis on Maryland citizens (especially people of color), Maryland voters overwhelmingly passed measures to legalize cannabis.**

**Notwithstanding the legalization of cannabis, many criminal penalties remain. Many Marylanders (especially Marylanders of color) continue to suffer the effects of criminal convictions for possession of cannabis; including but not limited to the inability to secure employment, rent housing and other privileges afforded to Marylanders who do not have a criminal convictions for cannabis possession. Without changes, Maryland's cannabis laws will continue to negatively affect all Marylanders; but mostly, Marylanders of color.**

**For example, between 2018- 2019, seventy-six percent (76%) of Marylanders arrested for possessing more than ten (10) grams of marijuana were Black, despite the fact that only thirty percent (30%) of the State's population is Black. From 2018 to 2019, seventy-five percent (75%) of those arrested for possession in Maryland were Black. Blacks are eight (8) times more likely to be arrested for marijuana in Queen Anne's County; six (6) times more likely in Carroll,**

**Cecil, and Frederick Counties; and five (5) times more likely in Allegany County. These statistics clearly demonstrate that Maryland's Black population is disproportionately more likely to be arrested and criminally convicted for possession of cannabis than their white counterparts.**

**The criminalization of cannabis and the selective enforcement of the law has perpetuated the false perception that cannabis use and possession by people of color is indicative of criminal activity. Whereas the use of cannabis by whites is viewed as recreational or medicinal.**

**As you must agree, more legislation is needed to address this unequal consequence of Maryland's cannabis law.**

**Last year, the legislature decided to send recreational marijuana use to a referendum but did not address the equitable implementation of the law. Now is the time to address the needed equitable aspects of Maryland's cannabis law.**

**I respectfully request that the Committee grant a favorable report on SB73.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jill P. Carter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jill P. Carter, Esq.