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Date: February 1, 2023

Re: SB 73 - Replacing criminal penalties with civil penalties for cannabis-related offenses

Position: SUPPORT

To: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Dear Distinguished Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 73, which would substitute civil penalties in place of criminal penalties for certain offenses relating to possessing, cultivating, and manufacturing cannabis products. My name is Debbie Ramsey and I represent myself as a retired detective, having served 12 years with the Baltimore Police Department, and as a speaker for the Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP).

LEAP is a nonprofit group of police, prosecutors, judges, and other criminal justice professionals who speak from firsthand experience serving in the justice system. Our mission is to make communities safer by focusing law enforcement resources on the greatest threats to public safety and working toward healing police-community relations.

In Maryland, criminal penalties for cannabis-related offenses contribute to the over-policing of communities of color and prevent thousands of individuals from stabilizing their lives. A misdemeanor conviction hinders an individual's access to employment, stable housing, and a range of public benefits. Misdemeanor conviction records can also bar individuals from residing at certain homes and exclude individuals with low income from utility payment plans and food stamps. With higher conviction rates, Black and Brown people bear the brunt of collateral consequences stemming from misdemeanor convictions.

Fortunately, legislators have introduced SB 73, which would decriminalize the use and possession of cannabis for adult use and distribution. Two-thirds of Marylanders voted in favor of marijuana legalization on the 2022 ballot because we know that criminalization creates more problems than legalization. SB 73 would replace criminal penalties with civil penalties for cannabis-related offenses and focus efforts

**LawEnforcementActionPartnership.org**

*Formerly known as Law Enforcement Against Prohibition*

on community service and substance abuse treatment. This bill would help Maryland catch up with the 21 states that have already fully legalized cannabis.

As a career law enforcement professional, I feel it is my responsibility to advocate in support of Senate Bill 73 in order to stop counterproductive collateral consequences and improve police-community trust. I strongly encourage its passage.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective and experience in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

Debbie Ramsey  
Retired Baltimore Police Department Detective  
Speaker, Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP)