



February 2, 2023

HB 232

Testimony from Olivia Naugle, senior policy analyst, MPP, favorable

Dear Chair Clippinger and members of the House Judiciary Committee:

My name is Olivia Naugle, and I am the senior policy analyst for the Marijuana Policy Project (MPP), the largest cannabis policy reform organization in the United States. MPP has been working to improve cannabis policy for 27 years; as a national organization, we have expertise in the various approaches taken by different states.

MPP has played a leading role in most of the major cannabis policy reforms since 2000, including more than a dozen medical cannabis laws and 12 of the 21 campaigns to enact legalization laws, including the first two states to legalize cannabis through the state legislature, rather than the ballot box — Illinois and Vermont.

The Marijuana Policy Project strongly supports legalizing and regulating cannabis for adults 21 and older and doing so in a way that repairs the damage inflicted by criminalization.

I am here today **in support of HB 232.**

This past election, Maryland voters voted overwhelming in favor (67.2 percent) of Question 4 – a constitutional amendment to legalize cannabis for adults in Maryland beginning July 1, 2023. In fact, the passage of Question 4 was the highest margin of any ballot measure to legalize cannabis.

While the passage of Question 4 was a critical step to end the failed policy of cannabis prohibition, Maryland could further reform its cannabis policy to protect residents from discrimination based on lawful cannabis activity. HB 232 is one step towards achieving that, as it would provide that the use of marijuana by a parent or certain other individuals does not qualify as neglect. As the state moves forward with legalization, parents should not be punished solely for lawful consumption of a product that is safer than alcohol.¹

Most of the more modern legalization laws include anti-discrimination protections. In fact, 10 of the now 21 legalization states include protections from discrimination for cannabis use in child custody, parental rights, or visitation. These states include Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, and Rhode Island.² Maryland should follow suit.

¹ <https://www.mpp.org/special/marijuana-is-safer/>

² <https://www.mpp.org/assets/pdf/issues/legalization/Review-of-State-Legalization-Laws.pdf>

Thank you Chair Clippinger and members of the committee for your time and attention to this issue. I urge a favorable report of HB 232.

If you have any questions or need additional information, I would be happy to help and can be reached at the email address or phone number below.

Sincerely,

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