



March 7, 2023

HB 980

**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 980.**

This past election, Maryland voters voted overwhelmingly 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 further criminal justice involvement and collateral consequences based on lawful cannabis activity. HB 980 is a step towards achieving that, as it would provide that a person will not violate parole, probation, or pre-trial release based on testing positive for cannabis, unless the Court or the Maryland Parole Commission makes a specific finding that the individual defendant, parolee, or probationer's use of cannabis could create a danger to the individual or other persons.

Recent legalization laws reflect a greater commitment to preventing lives from being derailed over cannabis. Most state cannabis legalization laws that have passed since early 2021 have included protections from parole and probation revocation. Connecticut, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico, and New York's laws all include language to prevent parole and probation from being revoked for cannabis in most or all cases. Maryland should join these more recent legalization states and pass HB 980 this year.

Thank you Chair Clippinger and members of the committee for your time and attention to this issue. I urge a favorable report of HB 980.

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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