

# **SB 699 - Cannabis reinvestment and repair.pdf**

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# NAACP

Maryland  
STATE CONFERENCE

March 7, 2024

Finance  
Maryland General Assembly  
Annapolis, Maryland

Re: SB 699 - Cannabis – Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund – Distribution and Use of Funds for Baltimore City

Members of the Committee,

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Maryland NAACP to express our strong support for Senate Bill 699, sponsored by Senator Washington. This bill is crucial for addressing the systemic disparities and injustices faced by communities of color in Baltimore City.

For decades, Baltimore City has grappled with the devastating effects of disinvestment and neglect. These communities have been disproportionately burdened with poverty, substandard housing, and inadequate resources due to systemic inequalities and discriminatory practices such as redlining.

Senate Bill 699 aims to address these longstanding disparities by allocating funds from the Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund directly to Baltimore City. By establishing an Equitable Community Investment Council in each Baltimore City State legislative district, the bill ensures that the allocation of funds is guided by the needs and priorities of the communities most affected by disinvestment.

Community-based organizations are crucial in providing essential services and programs to uplift and empower residents. However, these organizations often struggle to secure the funding necessary to meet the growing demand for their services.

Senate Bill 699 addresses this challenge by allocating funds through grants to community-based organizations for critical services and programs. This targeted investment will enable these organizations to expand their reach, improve their capacity, and better serve the needs of our communities.

Moreover, the bill empowers local communities to develop their own plans for allocating funds, ensuring that resources are directed where they are most needed and will have the greatest impact. This approach recognizes that communities are best positioned to identify their own priorities and solutions.

In conclusion, Senate Bill 699 represents a significant step towards addressing the legacy of disinvestment and neglect in Baltimore City. By reinvesting in our communities and supporting the vital work of community-based organizations, we can begin to build a more equitable and inclusive city for all residents.

I urge a favorable report on this important legislation. Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

In Service,

NaShona Kess, Esq., MLS

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**SB0699-FIN-OPP.pdf**

Uploaded by: Nina Themelis

Position: UNF



**BRANDON M. SCOTT**  
MAYOR

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**SB0699**

March 7, 2024

**TO:** Members of the Senate Finance Committee

**FROM:** Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

**RE:** SB0699: Senator Washington - Cannabis – Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund – Distribution and Use of Funds for Baltimore City

**POSITION: OPPOSE**

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **opposes** Senate Bill (SB) 699.

SB 699 would establish an Equitable Community Investment Council within each legislative district within the City of Baltimore. Each Council would include the senator from that district, a delegate from that district and up to 14 additional members appointed by the Governor of Maryland. Funding received from the Comptroller of Maryland from the Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund (the "Fund") would be sent to the Comptroller of Baltimore City and would then be equally split among the 5 Councils.

On July 17, 2023, Mayor Scott signed into law City Council Bill 23-0353, enacted as Ordinance 23-249, which established the Community Reinvestment and Reparations Commission. This Commission has been established in accordance with the Maryland Code – Alcoholic Beverages Subtitle which requires each county to "adopt a law establishing the purpose for which money received from the Fund may be used<sup>1</sup>." Currently, the Mayor and City Council are in the process of appointing members to the Commission and the City of Baltimore recently received its first funding allocation from the Comptroller of Maryland for the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2024.

The BCA believes that the existing law that established the Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund is fair and balanced in the manner in which funding is allocated and allows for each jurisdiction to develop the parameters by which they will allocate and distribute funding. There are existing legislative mandates concerning the eligible uses for the funding as well as reporting requirements for expenditures. Baltimore City was one of the first, if not the first, jurisdiction to establish the required local law as required under State law and has been working diligently since that time to appoint members and begin meeting.

SB 699 would require the Governor to appoint a minimum of 65 members for this Commission alone. That requirement may place a significant burden on the Appointment Secretary and is unnecessary given the steps the BCA and City Council have already undertaken.

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<sup>1</sup> Md. Code, AB § 1-322

Finally, the requirement to split the funding equally among the City's five legislative districts is inequitable. While the population within each legislative district may be approximately equal in number, there is disparity when seen through the lens of those communities disproportionately affected by prior cannabis prohibition enforcement. Given the allocation of the Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund by jurisdiction is based on this historic inequity, splitting this fund equally would be directly counter to the nature of the Fund that these Councils would be responsible for disbursing.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests an unfavorable report on SB 699.