

MDDCSAM is the Maryland state chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine whose members are physicians and other healthcare providers who treat people with substance use disorders.

February 25, 2025

The Honorable C. T. Wilson
Chair, House Economic Matters Committee
Room 231, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: HB 1377 - Cannabis - Advertising - Prohibited Locations - Letter of Opposition

Dear Chair Wilson:

The Maryland-DC Society of Addiction Medicine (MDDCSAM) submits this letter of opposition to **House Bill (HB) 1377 - Cannabis - Advertising - Prohibited Locations (Equity in Cannabis Advertising Act)**. This bill repeals Maryland's ban on outdoor cannabis advertising and replaces it with a 500-foot exclusionary zone for outdoor cannabis advertising around substance use disorder treatment facilities and child-focused locations such as schools, childcare centers, playgrounds, and public parks.

MDDCSAM opposes HB 1377 because it weakens an important public health measure that protects Maryland's minors. Sound public health research demonstrates that exposure to cannabis advertising is associated with greater intentions to use cannabis, positive expectancies about cannabis use, and greater cannabis use.¹ Cannabis use by adolescents is associated with psychosis, anxiety, depression, and impaired cognitive development, among other health problems^{2,3}.

The proposed 500-foot exclusionary zone is ineffective in protecting minors. First, it assumes that minors never travel more than 500-feet from their school, playground, or other protected location, which is clearly not true. Second, the bill does not provide an exclusionary zone around many public locations frequented by minors, such as museums, places of worship, and sports facilities.

This bill would remove Maryland from the group of 15 states (AL, DE, FL, HI, KY, MD, MN, MS, MT, NJ, NY, OH, SD, UT, and VA) that prohibits the use of billboards for cannabis advertising.⁴ Maryland's legal cannabis industry has generated \$1.1 billion in cumulative sales of cannabis products from July 2023 (the

¹ Padon, A. A., Ghahremani, D. G., Simard, B., Soroosh, A. J., & Silver, L. D. (2025). Characteristics and effects of cannabis advertisements with appeal to youth in California. *The International journal on drug policy*, 137, 104718. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2025.104718>

² Padoan, F., Colombrino, C., Sciorio, F., Piacentini, G., Gaudino, R., Pietrobelli, A., & Pecoraro, L. (2023). Concerns Related to the Consequences of Pediatric Cannabis Use: A 360-Degree View. *Children (Basel, Switzerland)*, 10(11), 1721. <https://doi.org/10.3390/children10111721>

³ Hurd, Y. L., Manzoni, O. J., Pletnikov, M. V., Lee, F. S., Bhattacharyya, S., & Melis, M. (2019). Cannabis and the Developing Brain: Insights into Its Long-Lasting Effects. *The Journal of neuroscience : the official journal of the Society for Neuroscience*, 39(42), 8250–8258. <https://doi.org/10.1523/JNEUROSCI.1165-19.2019>

⁴ AL- Ala. Admin. Code r. 538-X-4.17; 4 Del. Admin. Code 5001-10.0; Fla. Stat. Ann. § 381.986; Haw. Code. R. §§ 11-850-141, 145; 915 Ky. Admin. Reg. 1:090; MD Code, Alcoholic Beverages, § 36-903; Minn. Stat. § 342.64; 15 Miss. Code R. § 22-9- 9.2.1; Mont. Admin. R. 42.39.123; N.J. Admin. Code § 17:30-17.2; N.Y. Comp. Codes R. & Regs. Tit. 9, §§ 129.3, 129.4; Ohio Admin. Code 3796:5-7-01; S.D. Admin. R. 44:90:10:14.01; Utah Code Section 4-41a-403; Va. Code Ann. § 4.1-1401

opening of the market) through December 2024.⁵ Maryland's legal cannabis industry is clearly prospering without outdoor advertising.

HB 1377 contains three public health provisions that are actually unnecessary because they replicate existing laws relating to marketing cannabis. Advertising to minors⁶ and making false or misleading statements in advertisements⁷ are already prohibited by Maryland law. Making claims regarding the health benefits of a product in a cannabis advertisement is already severely limited. Current law requires such claims to be "supported by competent and reliable scientific evidence and include information on the most serious and most common side effects or risks associated with the use of cannabis⁸." No health claim has yet appeared in any legal cannabis advertisement in Maryland.

Current Maryland law protects minors from the harmful effects of outdoor cannabis advertising while allowing the legal cannabis industry to prosper. MDDCSAM respectfully urges this Committee to issue an unfavorable report on HB 1377.

Sincerely,

⁵ *MCA Medical and Adult-Use Cannabis Data Dashboard*, Maryland Cannabis Administration, available at <https://mmcc.maryland.gov/Pages/Data-Dashboard.aspx>.

⁶ MD Code, Alcoholic Beverages, § 36-903

⁷ MD Code, Commercial Law, § 13-301-320

⁸ MD Code, Alcoholic Beverages, § 36-902

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