

Position: Opposed with Amendments

Reasons for Opposition:

1. Prohibition of Safe Consumption Gatherings:

- Senate Bill 215 effectively makes it illegal to hold safe consumption gatherings in the state. This is a significant setback for public health and safety. Safe consumption spaces are crucial for reducing harm and providing a controlled environment for cannabis use. By prohibiting these gatherings, the bill ignores the benefits of harm reduction strategies that have been successful in other jurisdictions.

2. Creation of a Monopoly for License Holders:

- The bill creates a monopoly for existing license holders, shutting out small businesses and legacy players within the cannabis space. This monopolistic approach stifles competition and innovation, which are essential for a healthy and dynamic cannabis industry. Small businesses and legacy operators, who have been instrumental in building the cannabis industry, are unfairly disadvantaged by this legislation.

3. Hypocritical Criteria Compared to Alcohol:

- The criteria set forth in the bill are hypocritical when compared to the regulations governing alcohol, which is also an adult-use substance enforced by the same government office. The stringent restrictions on cannabis consumption lounges are not applied to alcohol establishments, creating an unfair double standard. This inconsistency undermines the credibility of the regulatory framework and unfairly targets cannabis consumers.

4. Restrictive Consumption Lounge Provisions:

- The consumption lounge portion of the bill is overly restrictive, limiting potential license holders and consumers alike. The stringent requirements and prohibitions on indoor smoking, among other restrictions, make it difficult for businesses to operate viable consumption lounges. This not only limits consumer choice but also hampers the growth of a sector that could provide significant economic benefits.

## Proposed Amendments:

### 1. Allow Safe Consumption Gatherings:

- Amend the bill to allow for the establishment of safe consumption spaces where individuals can consume cannabis in a controlled and supervised environment. These spaces should be regulated to ensure public health and safety but not outright prohibited.

### 2. Promote Fair Competition:

- Introduce provisions that ensure fair competition within the cannabis industry. This includes creating opportunities for small businesses and legacy operators to obtain licenses and operate consumption lounges. The bill should include measures to prevent monopolistic practices and encourage a diverse and competitive market.

### 3. Align Cannabis Regulations with Alcohol Regulations:

- Amend the bill to align the regulations for cannabis consumption lounges with those for alcohol establishments. This includes allowing indoor smoking in designated areas, similar to how alcohol consumption is permitted in bars and restaurants. The regulatory framework should be consistent across adult-use substances to avoid unjustified disparities.

### 4. Reduce Restrictive Provisions for Consumption Lounges:

- Modify the bill to reduce the restrictive provisions on consumption lounges. This includes allowing for more flexible operating hours, reducing the burden of additional licensing requirements, and permitting a wider range of cannabis consumption methods. These changes will make it easier for businesses to operate consumption lounges and provide consumers with more options.

## Conclusion:

Senate Bill 215, in its current form, poses significant challenges to public health, fair competition, and consumer choice. By prohibiting safe consumption gatherings, creating a monopoly for license holders, and imposing hypocritical and restrictive regulations, the bill undermines the potential benefits of a well-regulated cannabis industry. The proposed amendments aim to

address these issues by promoting harm reduction, fair competition, regulatory consistency, and consumer choice. We urge the committee to consider these amendments to create a more equitable and effective regulatory framework for cannabis in Maryland.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important issue.

Sincerely,

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