



Senate Bill 215: Cannabis—On-Site Consumption Establishments and Cannabis Events

On behalf of the Maryland Dispensary Association (MDDA)
Senate Finance Committee
Support with Amendments
January 30, 2025

The Maryland Dispensary Association (MDDA), formerly the Maryland Medical Dispensary Association (MDMDA), was established in May, 2017 in order to promote the common interests and goals of the Medical Cannabis Dispensaries in Maryland. MDDA advocates for laws, regulations and public policies that foster a healthy, professional and secure medical cannabis industry in the State. MDDA works on the State and local level to advance the interest of licensed dispensaries as well as to provide a forum for the exchange of information in the Medical Cannabis Industry. We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on Senate Bill 215.

Two years ago, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation, setting up both a policy and taxing framework for cannabis for adult use. This bill focused on increasing diversity in the cannabis industry while at the same time setting up a taxing structure so as to greatly minimize the illicit market. We commend you for the work you did to create a successful cannabis program in Maryland, and we are proud to be your partners in that.

Senate Bill 215 seeks to make changes to the on-site consumption lounge licenses established in the legislation that passed two years ago. In addition, it seeks to create cannabis event licenses and vendor licenses related to those events. We respectfully request consideration of the following amendments:

Current law stipulates that dispensary licensees are prohibited from also owning an on-site consumption lounge license. We strongly believe dispensary licensees should be eligible to

apply for an onsite consumption lounge. Dispensaries are the retail face of the cannabis industry and, therefore, have experience with cannabis products. They have an understanding about how to safely store, handle and sell products and already have staff trained to recognize and handle intoxication and substance use disorders. It makes sense that on-site consumption lounges would be located in conjunction with dispensaries. Further, we believe on-site consumption lounges should not solely be limited to social equity applicants.

Additionally, Senate Bill 215 stipulates on-site consumption lounges can only sell edible and beverage products. We strongly urge the committee to allow for combustible products, too. Many people, especially renters, are not allowed to smoke or vape in their place of residence. On-site consumption lounges, then, provide for them a place to do that. This is important when you consider that a majority of the people who purchase cannabis from a cannabis dispensary currently are purchasing products for smoking or vaping.

We appreciate the creation of event licenses in this bill and understand that a lot of the details on how such a license will work, including the vendor licenses, would be established in regulations. Currently the bill allows for either a processor or a dispensary partnering with an establishment to sell edibles and beverages onsite at an event OR for an event location to purchase edibles and beverages from a processor and dispensary so that these products may be purchased directly from event staff. We are opposed to the latter arrangement and support the former. However, we believe dispensaries should be the only licensee category able to partner with an event location to sell products to the public. Once again, dispensaries are the retail face of the cannabis industry and, therefore, have experience with cannabis products. They have an understanding about how to safely store, handle and sell products and already have staff trained to recognize and handle intoxication and substance use disorders.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on Senate Bill 215. Thank you for your support of the cannabis industry. We urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 215 with the amendments included in this testimony.