

Statement on HB 0132: Opposition to Restricting Lounge Licenses to Social Equity Applicants

I am against HB 0132, which limits on-site cannabis consumption lounge licenses to social equity applicants. The definition of “social equity” being used is flawed and does not reflect true inclusivity or fairness.

As a Black woman from the second poorest county in Maryland and a disabled veteran, I have been excluded from participating in the cannabis industry. Despite earning a Master of Social Work and a Master of Science in Cannabis Science and Therapeutics, I’ve still faced systemic barriers. Because I didn’t live in one of the designated zip codes, attend school there, or graduate from an HBCU, I was ineligible to qualify as a social equity applicant. The on-site consumption lounge license was my last hope to enter the industry and contribute to this growing market. Now, HB 0132 shuts that door too.

Adding to my challenges, the military discharged me over cannabis use without even having an actual positive urinalysis on record. I only discovered this 12 years after my discharge. That injustice derailed my career, forcing me to fight to rebuild my life and professional standing. Yet here I am, working to bring equity and fairness to an industry that should be accessible to all.

What does real social equity look like? It should be about creating opportunities for people like me—those who have been marginalized and are trying to build a future in an industry that has historically harmed our communities. Instead, this bill reinforces barriers and denies access to someone like me who represents exactly what equity should include.

I’m asking that you open lounge licenses to everyone and ensure that every county, especially those on the Eastern Shore, can have at least two lounges. We can already purchase cannabis from dispensaries and cultivators—why not allow broader access to on-site consumption lounges?

If you truly want cannabis reform to be equitable, including someone like me in this industry would be a step in the right direction.

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