



Testimony - SB 969, Howard County - Department of Fire and Rescue Services -
Current and Prospective Employee Medical Cannabis Use

Favorable

Senate Finance Committee

March 6, 2025

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Director of Political & Legislative Affairs on Behalf of SEIU Local 500

Honorable Chairwoman Beidle and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

SEIU Local 500 is one of Maryland's largest public sector unions representing over 23,000 workers. We stand in solidarity with our union brethren among our firefighters and public safety personnel in supporting Senate Bill 969. This legislation is a crucial step toward ensuring that these dedicated professionals can access necessary medical treatment without fear of unjust consequences. For too long has the discrimination against public employees for utilizing a state sanctioned medicine been allowed to continue.

Firefighters, paramedics, emergency medical technicians (EMTs), and other public safety personnel face extreme physical and psychological challenges in their line of duty. Many of these individuals suffer from chronic pain, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other medical conditions for which medical cannabis has been prescribed as a safe and effective treatment. Senate Bill 969 ensures that these employees are not unfairly disciplined or discharged simply for adhering to a treatment plan that is legally recognized by the state of Maryland.

This bill does not compromise public safety. It includes clear provisions allowing employers to maintain policies that prohibit employees from being impaired while on duty. It also respects federal regulations by ensuring that compliance with this law does not result in the loss of federal funding or licensing. Rather than creating risks, this bill fosters a more supportive and just workplace for our first responders.

By passing Senate Bill 969, Maryland affirms its commitment to protecting the rights of employees who put their lives on the line for our communities. It ensures that these individuals are not forced to choose between their careers and their health. We hope this first step in ending employment discrimination for medical cannabis patients in public safety positions can be built upon in future years to ensure no Marylander feels insecure in having to choose between employment and relief from chronic debilitating conditions alleviated by medical cannabis use.

We respectfully urge the committee to give SB 969 a favorable report. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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