

**MMC - SB0925 - Favorable - Final.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jayson Spiegel

Position: FAV



## MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

*Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy*

March 4, 2026

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Budget and Taxation Committee  
3 West Miller Senate House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Request for a **Favorable** Report – SB0925 - Sales and Use Tax - Distribution of Cannabis Sales Tax Revenue - Maryland Veterans Trust Fund

Dear Chair Guzzone and Distinguished Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee

On behalf of the members of the Maryland Military Coalition (MMC), I request a **FAVORABLE Report** by the Committee on **SB0925 – Sales and Use Tax – Distribution of Cannabis Sales Tax Revenue – Maryland Veterans Trust Fund** sponsored by Senator Harris. This bill directs that 3% of the sales and use tax revenue collected from the sale of cannabis to be distributed to the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund (the MVTF),

The MVTF was established in State Government Article § 9-913. The MVTF is a nonprofit entity within the Department of Veterans and Military Families (DVMF) established to provide emergency financial assistance, or grants, to veterans and members of the Maryland National Guard to cover expenses such as mortgage or rent payments, utility payments, and auto and auto insurance payments. In addition, the MVTF may also provide grants to organizations that deliver services to veterans. Thus far, the MVTF receives no State appropriated funds. Rather, the MVTF relies on private-sector donations, and proceeds from lotteries and other games. This year, for the first time, an income tax checkoff (line 39 of Maryland Form 502) will be available to further fund the MVTF.

Unfortunately, the MVTF periodically runs out of funds and cannot support all potential deserving claimants. When the MVTF runs out of funds, applications for assistance are suspended. Last year, more than 200 qualified applicants were initially denied support due to insufficient funds. This challenge is particularly acute in times of Government shutdowns, DOGE reductions to the federal workforce, and rising inflation.

As the Executive Director of the MVTF said at a Maryland Veterans Commission meeting last year, “there are too many claimants and not enough funds.” In response, the DVMF has

Subject: Request for **FAVORABLE Report** – SB0925 - Sales and Use Tax - Distribution of Cannabis Sales Tax Revenue - Maryland Veterans Trust Fund

launched a fund-raising campaign to increase private sector donations to the MVTF. <https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/donation-form/calendar-26-mvtf-donations> and established a feature in kiosks at Maryland Motor Vehicle offices where users can make donations. While an aggressive fund-raising campaign is laudable, the MVTF requires a sustained revenue stream that will enable it to satisfy the needs of eligible claimants suffering financial hardship.

The MMC applauds Senator Harris's innovative solution to help solve the MVTF's financial shortfall and place the MVTF on sound financial footing. SB0925 would direct a small percentage (3%) of proceeds from the cannabis sales tax to fund the MVTF now and in the future. This bill ensures that the MVTF will have an additional source of funds to support all potential veteran claimants who are suffering financial hardship and apply for assistance.

The Maryland Military Coalition **strongly supports SB0925** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report from the Budget and Taxation Committee.

The Maryland Military Coalition is a registered non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization comprised of prominent Maryland-based veteran and military groups. It represents over 150,000 service-connected individuals, including those currently serving, veterans, retirees and their families, caregivers and survivors. For further information, visit our website at <https://mdmilcoalition.org/>.

We want to thank Senator Harris for sponsoring this legislation and supporting the uniformed services community in Maryland.

Respectfully,



Jayson L. Spiegel  
LTC, AUS (Ret)  
President

## **Member Organizations of the Maryland Military Coalition**

Air Force Sergeants Association

American Military Society

American Minority Veterans Research Project

Association of the United States Navy

Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service

Disabled American Veterans

Fleet Reserve Association of Annapolis

Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A

Maryland Air National Guard Retirees' Association

National Active and Retired Federal Employees, Maryland Veterans

Maryland Veterans Chamber of Commerce

Military Officers Association of America

Military Order of the Purple Heart

Military Order of the World Wars

Montford Point Marines of America

National Association of Black Veterans

National Active and Retired Federal Employees, Maryland Veterans

Naval Enlisted Reserve Association

NOAA Association of Commissioned Officers

Reserve Organization of America

Society of Military Widows

Veterans of Foreign Wars

**SB0925\_Testimony\_Dr\_Cashenna\_Cross.pdf**

Uploaded by: Dr Cashenna A Cross

Position: FWA

The Honorable Dr. Cashenna A. Cross, Councilwoman At Large, City of Glenarden,  
Maryland, United States Air Force Veteran

Testimony on Senate Bill 925

Determination: Favorable With Amendments

Chair and Members of the Committee,

I submit this testimony grounded in my service as a municipal leader, a veteran, and a public servant committed to public safety, community stability, and accountable governance. Senate Bill 925 reflects a continued effort by the State to modernize criminal law while recognizing the evolving legal status of cannabis and the need to address serious firearm related offenses. The bill attempts to balance public safety with proportional justice, and for that reason I offer support with amendments.

From a municipal perspective, clarity in law enforcement standards is essential. The authorization allowing limited personal manufacturing of cannabis products without volatile solvents provides a controlled framework that reduces unsafe underground activity. By clearly defining personal use amounts and adult sharing, the bill helps law enforcement distinguish between personal conduct and criminal distribution. This clarity supports local governments that must manage community expectations while preserving public safety.

The provisions allowing courts to reconsider certain mandatory minimum sentences imposed in earlier periods recognize that sentencing policy has evolved. Communities across Maryland, including municipalities like mine, continue to experience the long term social and economic effects of disproportionate sentencing practices. Allowing judicial review where rehabilitation and public safety can be demonstrated is consistent with responsible governance and strengthens trust in the justice system.

Equally important are the strengthened penalties addressing firearm trafficking, stolen firearms, and unserialized weapons. Local officials regularly confront the consequences of illegal firearms entering neighborhoods. Elevating these offenses reinforces accountability and aligns with the expectation that legalization in one area of law must be paired with stronger safeguards in another.

However, amendments are necessary to ensure effective implementation at the local level. First, municipalities should be provided clear guidance and coordination authority regarding residential manufacturing standards to ensure zoning, fire safety, and nuisance protections are preserved. Without coordination, local governments may face enforcement challenges that shift burdens onto municipal resources.

Second, the bill should include a requirement for statewide public education regarding lawful cannabis manufacturing limits and firearm compliance requirements. Experience shows that compliance improves when residents clearly understand legal boundaries.

Third, data reporting requirements should be added to track outcomes related to sentence modification petitions and firearm enforcement actions. Transparent reporting allows policymakers and municipalities to evaluate whether reforms are improving safety and equity.

Senate Bill 925 moves Maryland toward a more balanced framework that recognizes personal liberty while reinforcing accountability where community harm is greatest. With the proposed amendments, the legislation can better support local governments, strengthen public trust, and

maintain a strong public safety posture. For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report with amendments.

Respectfully submitted, The Honorable Dr. Cashenna A. Cross

# **SB0925 Written Testimony .pdf**

Uploaded by: Shanetha Lewis

Position: FWA

# VETERANS INITIATIVE 22

## Because We C.A.R.E

### Testimony on Maryland Senate Bill 925:

TO: Chair Senator Guy Guzzone, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

FROM: Shanetha Lewis, Veterans Initiative 22, Executive Director

DATE: 03/02/2026

BILL: SB0925

POSITION: Favorable with Amendments

Chair Senator Guzzone and esteemed members of the Budget and Taxation committee,

First I want to say thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony in support of SB0925. My name is Shanetha Marable-Lewis. I am a proud Army combat veteran, and the Executive Director of Veterans Initiative 22, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that focuses on preventing Veteran Suicide through helping Veterans, Family and First Responders by providing resources, opportunities, and continuously advocating for safe and affordable access to medical cannabis. VI22 was named as such after the estimated 22 Veterans who commit suicide daily due to PTSD, and it is our organization's goal to bring national awareness to this tragedy, while also working to improve the lives of Veterans and First Responders across the country.

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Veterans Initiative 22 in strong support of Senate Bill 0925, which would direct a portion of cannabis sales tax revenue to the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund. However, I respectfully urge this committee to amend the bill to increase the allocation from 3% to 5% of cannabis sales tax revenue.

Please note our strong **support** for this bill. For the following reasons:

### **THE CRISIS WE FACE**

Every day, 22 veterans and active duty service members die by suicide in America. This statistic is not just a number—it represents fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, and community members who served our nation and deserved better care when they returned home. In Maryland alone, we lose approximately 150 veterans to suicide annually, a tragedy compounded by the reality that many of these deaths are **preventable** with proper access to evidence-based treatments and support services.

# VETERANS INITIATIVE 22

## Because We C.A.R.E

### THE INTERSECTION OF CANNABIS AND VETERAN HEALTH

Here at VI22 we have witnessed firsthand the transformative impact of medical cannabis on veteran health outcomes. The evidence is compelling:

- Veterans use cannabis to manage service-connected conditions including PTSD, traumatic brain injury, chronic pain, and moral injury
- Cannabis has shown promise in reducing opioid dependence and overdose deaths among veterans
- Peer-reviewed research increasingly supports cannabis as a therapeutic option for conditions disproportionately affecting the veteran population
- Access barriers—**including cost**—prevent many veterans from obtaining this potentially life-saving medicine

### WHY THIS BILL MATTERS

Senate Bill 925 acknowledges a fundamental truth: the legal cannabis industry in Maryland exists in part because of the advocacy, research, and lived experiences of veterans like myself and the thousands we serve through VI22. Veterans have been at the forefront of cannabis reform, testifying before legislators, participating in clinical research, and building community support for safe access.

It is both appropriate and just that veterans benefit directly from the tax revenue generated by an industry they helped legitimize.

### WHY 5% IS THE RIGHT NUMBER

While we appreciate Senator Harris's leadership in filing this legislation at 3%, Veterans Initiative 22 respectfully requests an amendment to increase the allocation to 5% for the following reasons:

#### 1. **PROPORTIONATE IMPACT:**

Veterans represent approximately 6% of Maryland's population but throughout the US account for disproportionately high rates of medical cannabis patients seeking treatment for service-connected conditions. A 5% allocation more accurately reflects veteran utilization and need.

# **VETERANS INITIATIVE 22**

## Because We C.A.R.E

### **2. CRITICAL SERVICES FUNDING:**

The Maryland Veterans Trust Fund supports essential programs that directly address veteran suicide prevention, mental health services, family support, and crisis intervention. Current funding levels cannot meet the demonstrated need. An additional 2% would generate substantial resources for evidence-based interventions.

### **3. FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY:**

Under current law, 22% of cannabis sales tax revenue goes directly to the General Fund. Increasing the veterans allocation to 5% would reduce this to 20%—a modest adjustment that maintains substantial general revenue while prioritizing those who served.

### **4. NATIONAL RECOGNITION:**

Maryland has an opportunity to lead again by establishing the most robust state-level cannabis tax allocation for veteran services in the nation.

### **5. ECONOMIC JUSTICE:**

Many veterans live on fixed incomes and struggle to afford medical cannabis despite its therapeutic benefits. Due to the current Schedule I status, regardless of recent Executive Orders, the VHA does not provide any repayment and/or compensation for medical cannabis products or the state mandated certifying provider appointment to obtain a medical cannabis card, the Enhanced Trust Fund resources would enable grant programs to subsidize access for these low-income veterans, reducing this substantial financial barrier to care.

# **VETERANS** **INITIATIVE**

## Because We C.A.R.E

### **PROPOSED AMENDMENT**

We respectfully request the following amendment to SB0925:

On page 4, line 6, strike "3%" and insert "5%"

On page 4, line 8, strike "22%" and insert "20%"

This amendment would:

- Increase Maryland Veterans Trust Fund allocation to 5% of cannabis sales tax revenue
- Maintain 75% allocation to Cannabis Regulation and Enforcement, Social Equity, Community Reinvestment, counties, public health, and business assistance programs
- Reduce General Fund allocation from 22% to 20%

### **CONCLUSION**

Senate Bill 925 represents a meaningful commitment to Maryland's veterans—a recognition that those who sacrificed for our freedoms deserve support when they return home. The connection between cannabis policy and veteran wellness is not theoretical; it is documented in peer-reviewed research, clinical outcomes, and the lived experiences of thousands of Maryland veterans.

By amending this bill to allocate 5% of cannabis sales tax revenue to the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund, this committee has the opportunity to:

- Strengthen suicide prevention infrastructure
- Reduce barriers to evidence-based treatments
- Honor the advocacy work veterans have contributed to cannabis reform
- Establish Maryland as a national leader in veteran-centered cannabis policy
- Save lives

Our veterans deserve more than our gratitude—they deserve our investment. They deserve access to the treatments that work. They deserve a system that prioritizes their health and well-being with the same dedication they showed in their service.

# **VETERANS** **INITIATIVE 22**

## Because We C.A.R.E

I urge you to vote favorably on Senate Bill 925 with the proposed amendment to increase the allocation to 5%.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions.

Respectfully,

Shanetha Marable-Lewis, MS MCST  
Veterans Initiative 22  
Executive Director  
304-322-6384  
[info@veteransinitiative22.com](mailto:info@veteransinitiative22.com)

# **DBM SB925 Sales and Use Tax - Distribution of Can**

Uploaded by: Dana Phillips

Position: INFO

WES MOORE  
*Governor*

ARUNA MILLER  
*Lieutenant Governor*



YAAKOV "JAKE" WEISSMANN  
*Acting Secretary*

MARC L. NICOLE  
*Deputy Secretary*

## **TITLE HOUSE/SENATE BILL: SB925 Sales and Use Tax - Distribution of Cannabis Sales Tax Revenue - Maryland Veterans Trust Fund**

**DATE: March 3rd 2026**

**COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation**

**SUMMARY OF BILL:** Senate Bill 925 proposes a structural reallocation of Maryland's cannabis sales and use tax revenue to provide a dedicated funding stream for the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund. Under current law, distributions are made to administrative expenses and to specific community funds; the remaining revenue is distributed, with 25% going to the State's General Fund. This bill reduces the General Fund share to 22% and redirects the remaining 3% directly to the Veterans Trust Fund.

**EXPLANATION:** Although the Department understands the intent of reallocating these funds, a 3% adjustment to the cannabis tax distribution would result in a substantial \$4 million annual diversion from the State's General Fund. The Department of Budget and Management is charged with submitting a balanced budget to the General Assembly annually and will be working with the General Assembly to achieve structural balance over the long term. This mission is further complicated by significant uncertainty regarding federal uncertainty in both policy and budgetary senses, which requires the State to maintain a higher degree of fiscal resilience. In light of current projected general fund deficits in fiscal 2027 and beyond, the Department urges caution in passing legislation that significantly increases expenditures without commensurate decreases in other areas. In light of the current fiscal crisis, the state government must be disciplined and strategic in its funding decisions to protect essential services. Any legislation that increases spending should include specific, identified, and sustainable funding offsets.

Given the forecasted out-year deficits as well as significant uncertainty regarding the federal budget and policy changes, it would be challenging for the State to manage this increase in spending. This challenge is compounded by major, unforeseen changes in federal policy and other ongoing budgetary pressures. The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) now forecasts significant shortfalls beginning in Fiscal Year 2027 and beyond.

**For additional information, contact Dana Phillips at  
(410) 260-6068 or [dana.phillips@maryland.gov](mailto:dana.phillips@maryland.gov)**

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<http://dbm.maryland.gov>

**LOI\_SB 925\_MCA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Selena Rawlley

Position: INFO



**TITLE SENATE BILL:** SB 925 - Sales and Use Tax - Distribution of Cannabis Sales Tax Revenue - Maryland Veterans Trust Fund

**COMMITTEE:** Senate Budget & Taxation, Chair Guy Guzzone

**DATE:** March 4, 2026

**POSITION:** Letter of Information

**SUMMARY OF BILL:** As introduced, Senate Bill 925 restructures how Maryland allocates revenue from the cannabis sales and use tax by establishing a dedicated source of funding for the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund. Currently, tax proceeds are first used to cover administrative costs of the Maryland Cannabis Administration and its partners, and then dolled out to specific community funds via the Cannabis Regulation and Enforcement Fund (CREF), including the Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund, the Cannabis Business Assistance Fund, and the Cannabis Public Health Fund. The remaining revenue is then distributed, with 25% going into the State's General Fund. SB 925 lowers the General Fund allocation to 22% and directs the remaining 3% to the Veterans Trust Fund.

**INFORMATION:** A 3% adjustment to the cannabis sales and use tax distribution formula would result in an estimated annual reduction of approximately \$4 million to the State's General Fund. Moreover, MCA believes that the Maryland General Assembly expressly intended for cannabis tax revenues to be directed toward the statutorily defined, cannabis-related community partnership and development programs enumerated in Md. Code, Tax-General § 2-1302.2(1)(ii)(2). As proposed, SB 925 would present a significant departure from this legislatively established purpose.

**CONCLUSION:** Though SB 925 does not directly affect MCA's operational capacity, the Administration, in consideration of projected General Fund deficits beginning in fiscal year 2027 and continuing thereafter, offers this context to underscore the potentially significant fiscal implications of CREF expenditures on the State's General Fund.