



**2026 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

BILL: SB 594 - Cannabis - Advertising - Alterations
COMMITTEE: House – Economic Matters Committee
POSITION: Letter of Concern
BILL ANALYSIS: SB 594 repeals certain prohibitions on cannabis advertising targeting minors; revises the definition of “therapeutic or medical claim”; removes requirements regarding data needed to determine the likely target audience for advertising; modifies signage requirements on the premises of licensed dispensaries, among other changes.

POSITION RATIONALE: The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) submits this letter of concern for SB 594. The bill proposes several changes to existing prohibitions on advertising targeting minors and loosens requirements on cannabis businesses to ensure that the likely audience for any given media is expected to be 21 years of age or older.

MACHO has significant concerns about the potential impact of these proposed changes to the advertising requirements. Specifically, the bill would permit advertising that indirectly targets individuals under the age of 21 and permits the use of designs and images that may be attractive to minors. It also removes the requirement that cannabis businesses rely on current and reliable audience composition data to ensure that at least 85% of the audience is reasonably expected to be aged 21 or older.

As written, the bill weakens important protections enacted by the state to reduce the risk of cannabis use among youth. Repeated exposure to cannabis advertising reduces the perception of risk related to cannabis and increases the likelihood of cannabis use among youth. The negative consequences of cannabis use among youth are well-documented: increased risk of mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, challenges with maintaining attention, learning, and problem-solving, and increased risk for cannabis use disorder as an adult.

The current law provides important protections to limit youth exposure to cannabis advertising. From an economic standpoint, the legalization of adult cannabis use in Maryland has been a tremendous success, and there is little to suggest that existing law is a barrier to cannabis businesses in the state. Given the profound public health implications, MACHO respectfully requests that lawmakers give serious consideration to the changes SB 594 proposes to the law in Maryland.

For these reasons, MACHO respectfully submits this letter of concern for SB 594. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at rmaioral@jhu.edu or 410-937-1433. *This communication reflects the position of MACHO.*