



State of Maryland Commission on Civil Rights

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**House Bill 797 - Employment Discrimination - Fire and Rescue Public Safety
Employees - Use of Medical Cannabis
Position: Support**

Dear Chairperson Valderrama, Vice Chairperson Charkoudian, and Members of the House Economic Matters Committee:

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights ("MCCR"; "The Commission") is the State agency responsible for enforcing Maryland's laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, state contracts, commercial leasing, and health services based on race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, physical and mental disability, source of income, and military status.

House Bill 797 amends Maryland's employment anti-discrimination law to protect firefighters, emergency medical technicians, cardiac rescue technicians, and paramedics from adverse employment actions, such as discipline and discharge, because they are authorized to use or use medical cannabis. HB797 includes carve outs for various reasonable exceptions, such as potential conflicts with federal law, while authorizing employers to adopt reasonable policies and procedures relating to the performance of official duties.

Since legalization, medical cannabis has been an emerging area of concern for employers throughout Maryland. HB797 adds much needed uniform structure to Maryland's employment anti-discrimination law so that employers invested in compliance are able to accommodate the needs of fire and rescue public safety employees while simultaneously ensuring that their communities are adequately protected. The language adopted by HB797 is consistent with Maryland's existing anti-discrimination laws.

For these reasons, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights urges a favorable vote on HB797. Thank you for your time and consideration of the information contained in this letter. MCCR looks forward to the continued opportunity to work with you to promote and improve fair housing and civil rights in Maryland.

"Our vision is to have a State that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination."

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