



HB 797: Support Employment Protections for Fire and Rescue Employees

March 9, 2026

Re: Maryland House Economic Matters Hearing on HB 797, In Support

Dear Chair Valderrama, Vice-Chair Charkoudian, and distinguished members of the committee:

The Marijuana Policy Project asks that you support and pass HB 797, as it would greatly benefit and protect Maryland's first responders and the Marylanders they protect and serve. Specifically, the bill would limit discrimination against firefighters, EMTs, and paramedics for medical cannabis use when they are off duty.

We ask that you pass this bill to ensure emergency workers who are also medical cannabis patients do not have to be in fear of losing their jobs for testing positive for medical cannabis or its metabolites. This is important because an individual may test positive long after impairment wears off. A person can test positive in a urinalysis 30 days or more after last using cannabis.¹

Employers could still take adverse action against fire and rescue employees if doing so was required by federal law, if the employee was impaired, or if the employee used cannabis within the 12 hours prior to a shift.

We recognize that firefighters, EMTs, and paramedics work some of the most mentally and physically taxing jobs in the world. They should be free to utilize cannabis to alleviate the toll their job takes on their mind and body when their shift ends. Cannabis can ease pain, anxiety, and PTSD, which are often brought on by their line of work, protecting us.

The federal ADA would protect these employees from discrimination for testing positive for *prescription* painkillers and other medicines they use off-hours. But federal law does not yet allow medical cannabis, so states and localities are having to enact protections on their own. Several localities in Maryland, including Baltimore County, Howard County,

¹ See: "How Long Does Weed Stay in Your System?," Healthline
<https://www.healthline.com/health/how-long-does-weed-stay-in-your-system>

Frederick County, and Annapolis have adopted ordinances to protect some or all public employees based on a positive cannabis result.²

Notably, 24 of the 40 medical cannabis states offer some form of employment protections in the public and/or private sector.³ While Maryland has shown leadership on many cannabis justice policies, employment protections lag behind for the state.

We also hope to see these protections be extended beyond fire and EMS workers in the future. Maryland workers deserve protection from being discriminated against for medical cannabis use in their free time as well.

Please support this bill and the positive impact it will make for our fire and rescue responders' lives. Our first responders deserve to responsibly take advantage of Maryland's medical cannabis program for relief after sacrificing so much to take care of their neighbors during their darkest hours. It is also not in Maryland's interest to fire or fail to hire competent first responders for using medical cannabis off-hours.

Karen O'Keefe
Director of State Policies
Marijuana Policy Project

Bridget Spiddle
Public Policy Coordinator
Marijuana Policy Project

² See: "Maryland: Howard County Firefighters No Longer Face Sanctions for Off-Hours Use of Medical Cannabis," NORML, Jan. 6, 2026.

³ See: "Medical Cannabis Laws and Employment Protections," Marijuana Policy Project <https://www.mpp.org/issues/medical-marijuana/medical-cannabis-laws-and-employment-protections/>