

From the Desk of Congressman David Trone

March 11, 2026

The Honorable Kriselda Valderrama
Economic Matters Committee
231 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Lorig Charkoudian
Economic Matters Committee
231 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Valderrama, Vice Chair Charkoudian, and Members of the Committee,

I write in strong support of *House Bill 797 - Employment Discrimination - Fire and Rescue Public Safety Employees – Use of Medical Cannabis* because this legislation reflects something I have long believed: we must always lead with compassion, humility, and proven solutions.

In Congress, I founded and co-chaired the Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health Task Force because I saw how urgently our country needed a coordinated response to the addiction and mental health crises. In Western Maryland, I saw firsthand how opioids devastated families. Chronic pain, workplace injuries, and untreated trauma too often became entry points to addiction. When people do not have access to safe, regulated options to manage pain and mental health challenges, they may turn to illegal, unregulated drugs—with consequences that can be fatal.

Our first responders understand trauma in a way most of us never will. They respond to overdoses, fatal accidents, violence, and unimaginable loss—and then are expected to return to work the next day carrying that weight. The invisible toll of that exposure is real, and too often it goes unaddressed.

They also carry a much higher risk of injury on the job — from fighting fires, to lifting patients — leading to chronic pain. Medical cannabis continues to be an effective tool to treat those conditions long-term.

Research increasingly shows that access to legal, medical-grade cannabis can reduce the likelihood that individuals rely on illicit opioids. In the face of that risk, providing a regulated, medically supervised alternative is about reducing harm. It keeps patients connected to healthcare providers, ensures product safety, and offers a safer path for those coping with pain or trauma.

House Bill 797 is another step in that fight. It reflects a public-health approach rooted in prevention, responsible regulation, and care for those carrying invisible burdens, including our first responders and working families.

We cannot undo the harm addiction has caused, but we can continue building a system that offers safer choices and real support. I respectfully urge your support of *House Bill 797*.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Trone".

David Trone

Former Member of Congress