

# MARYLAND CANNABIS PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

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The Honorable Kriselda Valderrama  
Chair, House Economic Matters Committee  
Room 231, House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

**RE: Senate Bill 594 –  
Cannabis - Advertising - Alterations – Letter of Opposition**

Dear Chair Valderrama and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Cannabis Public Health Advisory Council (CPHAC) respectfully submits this letter in opposition to Senate Bill 594 Cannabis Advertising Alterations.

SB 594 weakens several key public health protections in Maryland law that prohibit advertising to minors (those under 21 years of age). These changes substantially narrow existing safeguards and increase the risk that cannabis marketing will reach and influence Maryland’s youth. There is no marketing justification for relaxing these public health safeguards, as Maryland’s legal cannabis market is flourishing under current law. Total cannabis sales topped \$1 billion in both FY 2024 and FY 2025<sup>1</sup>.

The 2024 National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) report on cannabis policy explicitly recommends that legislators draw on lessons learned from alcohol and tobacco advertising when shaping cannabis regulations<sup>2</sup>. The committee of national experts noted that marketing restrictions developed for these substances – particularly those aimed at minimizing youth exposure – provide essential evidence-based framework for cannabis policy.

SB594 removes the ban in current law on advertising that “indirectly target[s]” or “is attractive to” minors. Public health evidence demonstrates that marketing does not need to be explicitly targeted or attractive to adolescents and youth to influence their behavior. This is why the Master Settlement Agreement between the tobacco industry and state attorneys general (including Maryland) prohibits both “direct and indirect” targeting of underage individuals by advertising<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland Cannabis Administration. (n.d.). MCA Medical and Adult-Use Cannabis Data Dashboard. Maryland Cannabis Administration. Retrieved February 17, 2026, from <https://cannabis.maryland.gov/pages/data-dashboard.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM). 2024. *Cannabis Policy Impacts Public Health and Health Equity*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. Doi: 10.17226/27766

<sup>3</sup> National Association of Attorneys General. (2019). Master Settlement Agreement and exhibits. <https://www.naag.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2019-01-MSA-and-Exhibits-Final.pdf>

Research consistently shows that exposure to cannabis advertising is associated with<sup>4,5</sup>:

- Increased cannabis use among adolescents
- Greater intentions to use cannabis
- More favorable attitudes toward cannabis
- Higher risk of cannabis use disorder

SB 594 allows additional exterior signage on cannabis dispensaries beyond what is permitted by current law. While additional signage can only contain administrative and safety information, any signage increases the environmental prominence of the dispensary. Exposure to dispensaries is associated with increased interest in and actual use of cannabis by adolescents<sup>6</sup>. The information allowed on this additional exterior signage confers little or no consumer or public health benefit. It is unlikely that a passing motorist or pedestrian will record this information for use.

SB 594 changes the method for establishing that the expected advertising audience age composition is at least 85% adult. Current law allows the Maryland Cannabis Administration (MCA) to make this evaluation. SB 594 requires the MCA to accept the most recent audience composition data from advertising entities. This gives less weight to independent measures of audience composition, e.g., Nielsen ratings for broadcast audiences.

SB 594 creates a potentially large loophole in the current advertising ban by excluding from the definition of advertising mention of a cannabis dispensary's branding and business information in the context of news articles, interviews, and editorial content. Nothing would preclude a cannabis representative from promoting a dispensary on a new media, social media or podcast interview.

In conclusion The Maryland Cannabis Public Health Advisory Council respectfully urges the Committee to issue an unfavorable report on SB 594. We urge the General Assembly to maintain strong, evidence-based protections that prioritize the health and wellbeing of Maryland's children and adolescents.

Respectfully submitted,



Deondra Asike, MD

Chair, Maryland Cannabis Public Health Advisory Council

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<sup>4</sup> Cannabis Marketing and Problematic Cannabis Use Among Adolescents, Pamela J. Trangenstein, et. al., *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 82(2), 288-296 (2021).

<sup>5</sup> Planting the Seed for Marijuana Use: Changes in Exposure to Medical Marijuana Advertising and Subsequent Adolescent Marijuana Use, Cognitions, and Consequences Over Seven Years, Elizabeth J. D'Amico, et al., *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, Volume 188, 385-391 (2018).

<sup>6</sup> Moran, M. B., Tharmarajah, S., Czaplicki, L., Thrul, J., Spindle, T. R., Vandrey, R., Pearson, J. L., & Zamarripa, C. A. (2025). *A narrative review of research on cannabis advertising in the United States. Current Addiction Reports*, 12(1), Article 92. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40429-025-00703-1>