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*Governor Wes Moore*

*Lt. Governor Aruna Miller*

*Secretary Walter L. Simmons*

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**Bill Number:** Senate Bill 594  
**Title:** Cannabis – Advertising – Alterations  
**Committee:** Finance Committee  
**Hearing Date:** February 26, 2026  
**Position:** Favorable with Amendments

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Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 0594 with amendments. The Office of Social Equity (OSE) generally supports the measures set forth in SB 0594 and appreciates the bill’s intent to modernize cannabis advertising standards while maintaining appropriate safeguards.

OSE supports reasonable flexibility in exterior signage to allow cannabis businesses to better differentiate themselves, build brand recognition, and compete in a regulated marketplace. Signage visibility is particularly important for small businesses and social equity licensees, many of whom rely on walk-in traffic and local brand awareness to remain viable.

OSE also supports continued protections against advertising that targets minors and encourages careful refinement of the bill’s language to ensure these guardrails remain strong and enforceable.

However, OSE has concerns about the bill’s definition of “therapeutic or medical claim.” As drafted, the definition requires claims to be explicit and supported by evidence demonstrating that a product can diagnose, treat, mitigate, cure, or prevent a disease or condition. This standard reflects a pharmaceutical-level evidentiary threshold that may not align with the realities of the current consumer goods industry. In practice, such a requirement could disproportionately advantage large entities with significant research capacity while creating barriers for small and emerging operators, such as social equity businesses.

Notably to date there have been no enforcement violations related to this issue, which suggests that the existing regulatory framework has not resulted in widespread harm or abuse.

OSE respectfully recommends striking the definition as drafted and collaborating with the Maryland Cannabis Administration and licensed operators to develop a balanced regulatory approach that protects public health while allowing licensees to make reasonable and responsible product representations.



For these reasons, the Office of Social Equity urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 0594 with amendments. OSE provides this information to assist the Committee in evaluating SB 0594. Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please contact me at (443) 610-1666 or [audrey.johnson1@maryland.gov](mailto:audrey.johnson1@maryland.gov), or Courtney Davis, Deputy Director, at (443) 610-1730 or [courtney.davis@maryland.gov](mailto:courtney.davis@maryland.gov).

Audrey Johnson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Audrey Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Executive Director, Office of Social Equity