

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 594 with Amendments**  
**Submitted by Devona Austin, Peake 70**  
**Senate Finance Committee**  
**February 24, 2026**

Chairman Beidle, Vice Chairman Hayes, and esteemed members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Devona Austin, and I am the Director of Business Development for Peake 70, a new, independently owned and operated cannabis dispensary preparing to open in Maryland. I am submitting this testimony to express our support for the intent of Senate Bill 594, while respectfully requesting amendments to ensure that new businesses like ours are not subject to undue restrictions that other legal businesses do not face.

As we prepare to open our doors, we are carefully reviewing the regulatory landscape to ensure we are compliant from day one. However, there are provisions within SB 594 that raise significant concerns for new licensees like Peake 70.

**Signage Size Restrictions Are Unreasonably Restrictive (§36-903(a)(2)(III))**

We are concerned about the proposed exterior signage size restrictions in §36-903(a)(2)(III), which limit individual signs to 900 square inches and total exterior signage to 1,200 square inches. While we are building a new business and have the opportunity to design compliant signage from the start, we believe these restrictions are unreasonable and single out cannabis businesses in a way that other entities are not held to. A 900-square-inch sign is roughly 2 feet by 3 feet, far smaller than what most retail businesses are permitted to display. If we are required to follow stricter rules than neighboring businesses simply because we are a cannabis dispensary, it puts us at a competitive disadvantage before we even open. Local zoning requirements should be sufficient to regulate signage, and we ask that the bill be amended to reflect that standard.

Additionally, the bill does not include a grandfathering provision for existing signage. While Peake 70 is a new licensee, we stand with our fellow dispensaries who have operated in good faith for years and now face the prospect of costly replacements. If this bill moves forward, we urge the Committee to include language that legacy signage in place before the effective date remains compliant.

**Hiring Events and Community Participation Remain Restricted**

As a new dispensary, we are eager to build relationships within the community we will serve. However, current regulations and the language in SB 594 regarding advertising and promotion surrounding hiring events create barriers to that engagement. It is important to note that hiring events were explicitly required as part of the application process for our license. To now face

restrictions on how we can advertise and promote those very same events creates a contradictory and confusing regulatory environment.

We want to be able to participate in local events, hire locally, and contribute to the community in meaningful ways. Unfortunately, historical community partners have been disappointed to learn that cannabis businesses are restricted from supporting and participating in events that benefit the neighborhoods we operate in. We ask that these restrictions be eased so that new businesses like Peake 70 can begin building those essential relationships from the start.

### **The "Intended" Standard for Editorial Content Is Subjective (§36-903(b)(4)(II))**

We appreciate that §36-903(b)(4)(II) creates an exception for the use of our trademarks and business names in "news article, interview, documentary, or other editorial content." However, the inclusion of the phrase "not intended as commercial advertising" introduces subjectivity that could chill legitimate media engagement. Cannabis businesses value the ability to participate in interviews and editorial content, but we cannot control how that content is edited or presented after the fact. We recommend removing the word "intended" to provide clearer protection for free and fair press access.

### **Fairness in Enforcement and Appeals (§36-903(c))**

Finally, on behalf of all licensed cannabis businesses, new and established, we want to raise a concern about the enforcement and appeals process. §36-903(c) states that "the Administration shall adopt regulations to establish procedures for the enforcement of this section," but the bill does not address the appeals process at all.

It is not fair for the Maryland Cannabis Administration to be the sole arbiter of compliance, leaving licensees to navigate lawsuits and lengthy appeals to determine whether a regulation was actually broken. If a business is found not in compliance, the process should be clear, fair, and timely. We ask that the bill be amended to include specific provisions for an impartial appeals process.

For these reasons, I respectfully encourage a favorable report on Senate Bill 594 with amendments that address these concerns and allow cannabis businesses to operate fairly, transparently, and as equal members of Maryland's business community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,  
Devona Austin  
Director of Business Development  
Peake 70