



**2026 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

BILL: SB 1008 – Alcohol and Cannabis – Cannabinoid Beverages Off-Premises Sales Permit - Establishment

COMMITTEE: Senate – Finance Committee

POSITION: Letter of Opposition

BILL ANALYSIS: SB 1008 would authorize the holder of a Class 1 wholesaler’s license to acquire and deliver, under certain circumstances, cannabinoid beverages to the holder of an alcoholic beverages license with an off-sale privilege that has been issued a certain permit; authorizes a local board of license commissioners to issue the permit to a holder of an alcoholic beverages license with an off-sale privilege which authorizes the holder to sell these cannabinoid beverages for off-premises consumption; alters the sales and use tax collected from said beverages; and exempts certain sales of these beverages from these wholesalers from sales and use tax.

POSITION RATIONALE: The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) submits this letter of opposition for SB 1008 in the interest of public health and safety. SB 1008 would allow licensed alcohol retailers with off-sale privileges to sell cannabinoid beverages. Currently, these beverages, which can contain up to 5mg of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), may only be sold by licensed and highly regulated cannabis dispensaries. MACHO opposes the proposed bill due to concerns about public health, social equity, and the reallocation of cannabis tax revenue, which would undermine existing investments in prevention, community reinvestment, and social equity programs.

SB 1008 would significantly increase the number of retail outlets selling these beverages, from approximately 100 dispensaries to as many as 1,500 alcohol retailers. This expansion raises the risk of underage access and diversion to youth. Since THC is absorbed more slowly than alcohol, individuals may consume these beverages in a manner similar to beer or wine coolers without immediately feeling the effects. This delayed onset increases the likelihood of overconsumption. While this poses risks for any consumer, it is especially concerning for youth, who are less equipped to make informed decisions about consumption. As a result, individuals may underestimate their impairment and be more likely to drive under the influence. Overconsumption also increases the risk of adverse health effects, including cannabis-induced psychosis.

Maryland’s cannabis industry was intentionally designed with a limited number of licenses to ensure effective oversight, consistent standards, and strong enforcement. Expanding sales through a much larger number of alcohol retailers, as proposed in SB 1008, would make the system more difficult to regulate, compromise consumer protections, and risk serious negative health consequences for young people in our communities.

MACHO also opposes the bill provision directing all tax revenue from these beverages to the State’s General Fund. Under current law, cannabis-related tax revenue supports public health initiatives, social equity efforts, community reinvestment, and local government programming. This funding structure was a key element of the original legislation. Redirecting these funds would weaken the ability of these programs and partners to fulfill the law’s intended goals. For these reasons, the Maryland Association of County Health Officers submits this Letter of Opposition for SB 1008. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at rmaiora1@jhu.edu or 410-937-1433. *This communication reflects the position of MACHO.*