

SB0061_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

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TESTIMONY ON SB#/0061- POSITION: FAVORABLE
Division of Correction - Release Preparation Program

TO: Chair Smith, Jr., Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#/0061, **Division of Correction - Release Preparation Program**

On June 16, 2024, Maryland Governor Wes Moore announced pardons for 175,000 persons convicted of crimes related to the possession of cannabis and cannabis paraphernalia. This bill is an attempt to chart a path for those individuals which will facilitate their integration back into their communities and society.

This bill will establish the Release Preparation Program in the Division of Correction for the purpose of providing access to formerly incarcerated individuals to State correctional facilities to assist incarcerated individuals with release preparation; and altering the purposes of the Cannabis Regulation and Enforcement Fund to include providing funds to cover the costs of supporting the Release Preparation Program. It will use funds from the legalization of cannabis to remediate the harms of incarceration for it.

Johns Hopkins University noted the results from the pardons issued and the predominate use of cannabis incarceration on minority communities.

In Maryland, the pardon applies to everyone convicted of marijuana possession—a population that is disproportionately Black. Although Black and African American persons make up 33% of Maryland's population, they comprise 70% of persons incarcerated in the state. This has real impacts in Black communities. Convictions on record make it harder for someone to obtain housing, employment, and education, all of which are crucial for achieving financial stability and building long-term wealth for future generations.¹

This bill will assist in easing the path forward for formerly convicted individuals to return to productive lives in our communities. It will provide the resources needed to implement programs that fulfill the governor's promise to "leave no one behind".

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#/0061.

¹ <https://carey.jhu.edu/articles/impacts-marylands-legalization-marijuana>