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Bill Number: HB 171

Haven N. Shoemaker, State's Attorney for Carroll County

Favorable

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF HAVEN N SHOEMAKER,
STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR CARROLL COUNTY,
IN FAVOR OF HOUSE BILL 171 – DRUG TRAFFICKING CRIME, DEFINITION

I write in favor of House Bill 171, Drug Trafficking Crime, Definition – amending the definition of what constitutes a drug trafficking crime and urge the Committee to issue a favorable report.

When the Legislature changed the laws to allow the legal possession and recreational use of cannabis in certain amounts, felony cannabis offenses became misdemeanors. These offenses included manufacture, distribution and the possession with intent to distribute cannabis. Individuals who are growing, selling and dealing cannabis are often doing so for profit. Dealers for profit are a scourge on our community and should be punished accordingly.

House Bill 171 involves dealers of the most dangerous circumstances, dealers who carry firearms. Amending the definition of Drug Trafficking Crimes to include cannabis misdemeanors affects only the most dangerous drug dealers. Whether a drug dealer carrying a firearm is dealing cocaine, fentanyl or cannabis should not make a difference.

Although individuals can obtain cannabis legally if they choose to do so at a dispensary, this change in circumstances has not rid Carroll County of cannabis dealers. Dealers are still peddling cannabis, often at cheaper prices and higher THC potency than can be found at a dispensary. This makes the dealers product still popular to those using controlled dangerous substances. In Carroll County cannabis dealers have not only been found to carry firearms but have committed violent offenses with these firearms including home invasion, robbery and kidnapping.

House Bill 171 is an arrow in the quiver of prosecutors to ensure the safety of the community. This bill is narrowly tailored to only affect the worst of the worst drug dealers. I urge a favorable report on House Bill 171 as it will help keep the citizens of the State of Maryland safe.