

Kia Pierce, disabled veteran and Maryland resident

Subject: Letter of Support for HB0151 – Allocation of Cannabis Revenue to the Veterans Trust Fund

Good afternoon Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee.

My name is Kia Pierce, and I am here today in strong support of HB0151, specifically the allocation of cannabis revenue to the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund.

I am a veteran, a Black woman, and a Maryland resident whose life has been directly impacted by cannabis policy. In 2010, I was discharged from the military allegedly for cannabis use. Recently, for the first time, I obtained a full copy of my military records and discovered there was no urinalysis on file supporting that claim. My DD-214 is currently before the Board for correction and upgrade.

My story is not unique. Many veterans—especially veterans of color—continue to carry lifelong consequences from cannabis enforcement that no longer aligns with Maryland law or values. Those consequences show up as barriers to housing, employment, benefits, and stability.

That is why dedicating cannabis revenue to the Veterans Trust Fund is not just reasonable—it is restorative.

The Veterans Trust Fund supports nonprofit organizations that remove barriers for veterans. I see this impact firsthand through my work with the American Legion Manny Scott Post 193, where we are rebuilding our post to better serve veterans, preserve history, and create accessible community space. These funds help organizations provide housing support, mental health services, legal assistance, and benefits navigation.

This investment is especially critical on Maryland's Eastern Shore, where affordable housing is scarce and veteran services are limited. Veterans in rural communities are often overlooked, yet face some of the greatest challenges.

If the State of Maryland is generating revenue from cannabis, those funds should help repair harm done to veterans who were disproportionately impacted by past policies. HB0151 does exactly that.

I respectfully urge a favorable report. Thank you for your time.

Kia Pierce