

Written Testimony
SB 504
Position: Favorable

I am writing to ask your support of SB 504 sponsored by Senator Smith.

I am a physical therapist in Maryland. I greatly enjoy my job working with babies who are at risk of delay or who have disabilities and their parents, a position I have held for over 20 years. I also have Ehlers Danlos which has lead to significant early onset arthritis and chronic pain. Recent research* has shown that while opioid use remains high in people with Ehlers-Danlos, 37% report using medical cannabis for symptom relief.

I consider myself fortunate that the opiates my prior primary care doctor swore were safe for me to take chronically for pain did not work for me nor was I able to tolerate the side effects. I am also fortunate that cannabis before bed allows me to sleep without pain. I can tolerate the daytime pain, but when I am still at night, the pain keeps me from sleeping. Cannabis has resolved this.

I use cannabis knowing that there is always a risk that my employer may find out and that it could impact my continued employment despite the fact that I do not use cannabis during the day. Ironically, I could take opiates with a prescription -even a low dose during the day - and not fear loss of my job but yet a much safer option that eliminates my pain without the horrible side effects of opiates, puts my job in danger. Interestingly, current Maryland cannabis laws protect me from loss of my professional license but not loss of my job.

I know of others who have not tried cannabis and instead have taken opiates for decades due to the fear of job loss. I also know of people who do use cannabis who are now stuck in a position because of the fear that a better opportunity may drug test. I waited for the medical cannabis program to become legal before trying cannabis which impacted my health due to the excessive ibuprofen causing a stomach ulcer. I have learned so much about cannabis since Maryland legalized and I know it is a much better, safer option for many people with chronic pain.

Please support this important legislation.

Thank you,

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*Demes JS, McNair B, Taylor MRG. Use of complementary therapies for chronic pain management in patients with reported Ehlers-Danlos syndrome or hypermobility spectrum disorders. Am J Med Genet A. 2020 Nov;182(11):2611-2623. doi: 10.1002/ajmg.a.61837. Epub 2020 Sep 10. PMID: 32909698.