



HB 32 – SUPPORT

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Cannabis – Legalization and Regulation 3
(Inclusion, Restoration, and Rehabilitation Act of 2021)
Hearing Feb 10

Dear Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am writing on behalf of Takoma Park Mobilization in support of HB 32 which legalizes cannabis. Takoma Park Mobilization is a member organization focused on our mission to mobilize our neighbors and community and to sustain and support local action for a more just and equitable society.

This bill legalizes possession and home cultivation of cannabis and expunges past cannabis offenses. As importantly, the bill establishes a social equity program to ensure that people that have been disproportionately impacted by both the war on drugs and economy inequity are included in the industry. The bill reinvests tax revenue to endowments to Maryland’s historically Black Colleges and Universities (Bowie, Morgan, Coppin, and U of M Eastern Shore) and to the communities that have been targeted by the drug war.

This bill will bring Maryland in line with 15 other states and the district that have legalized cannabis for adults. A recent Gallup poll¹ showed that a bipartisan majority of Americans (68 percent) support legalizing marijuana; the same is true for Marylanders², and that number is increasing year over year. That is because we recognize that our state cannot afford the costs of marijuana criminalization and can benefit from legalization and regulation, including racial and socioeconomic equity impacts and health impacts.

These costs include the massive direct costs of policing and prisons, but also the costs to individuals, families, and neighborhoods. These costs include loss of income during incarceration, loss of employment due to criminal records, and the fraying of the social fabric that is caused by removing valued members out of society and putting them in cages for months or years.

¹¹ <https://news.gallup.com/poll/323582/support-legal-marijuana-inches-new-high.aspx> (November 2020)

² <https://www.baltimoresun.com/politics/bs-md-goucher-policy-poll-20190215-story.html> (2019)

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In addition, regulating cannabis supports community health by ensuring consumers are not exposed to toxins when they consume cannabis, which studies have shown is less harmful than alcohol for adults.

This bill must be passed this year; with the crises Maryland is currently facing, including an economic downturn, the COVID pandemic, and the recognition of the legacy and impacts of racial inequality, we simply cannot afford to proceed with the failed drug war -- racially unequal policing and imprisonment of Black and Brown people, loss of income and job opportunities for families, nor the consequent social impacts, as well as financial costs and revenue losses to the state of Maryland.

We urge a favorable report on HB 32.