



HB 922 – FAV

March 3, 2023

The Honorable C.T. Wilson, Chair
House Economic Matters Committee
Room 231, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairman Wilson and Committee Members:

I am pleased to submit the following testimony for **House Bill 922: Economic Development - Program Participation - Cannabis Business Establishments** on behalf of Grow West LLC. By way of background, Grow West MD is a licensed cannabis cultivator and dispensary operator in Cumberland, MD.

Grow West MD was started by the Valois family, life-long residents of Maryland. While applying for a license to cultivate cannabis, the family looked to Cumberland as the site of their facility to provide opportunity for western Maryland residents. In fact, Grow West's grow facility is located in the former facilities that housed Kelly-Springfield Tire's manufacturing facility. Since locating to western Maryland, Grow West has continually invested in the community. Grow West is a major contributor to community events and vital community assets like the Western Maryland Food Bank.

Starting with 18 employees in March 2018, we are now 150 employees strong. We have been fortunate to provide good jobs for our employees, paying family sustaining wages and benefits. Many of our employees are first-time homebuyers, have purchased automobiles, and started families as a result of their employment with Grow West. A recent Cumberland Times-News article included a number of interviews from our employees. That article is appended to this testimony.

While we are a major employer in Allegany County, we are currently shut out of a number of incentives that the state offers to companies that make less economic impact than us simply because we cultivate medical cannabis. Important tax incentives like the One Maryland Tax Credit, Job Creation Tax Credit and others are utilized in Western Maryland and Baltimore City alike as targeted communities for these credits. However, cannabis companies who employ a large number of employees cannot take these same advantages.



As such, we are asking that this Committee give favorable consideration to HB 922. Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter. Should you or your staff have any questions regarding these matters, I can be reached at William.valois@growwestmd.com.

Sincerely,

William Valois, CEO
Grow West MD

DISPENSARY

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