



March 28, 2023

Senator Willam C. Smith, Chair
Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of The Committee:

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers strong **favorable** support for House Bill 980 – Criminal Procedure - Probation, Parole, and Pretrial Release Violations - Cannabis Use. **This bill is on the 2023 legislative priority agenda of the Black Caucus.**

In effect, this legislation will prohibit a court from revoking a defendant's pretrial release or finding that a defendant has violated probation, and the Maryland Parole Commission from finding that a parolee has violated parole, based solely on the use of cannabis or a positive test for cannabis unless the court or Commission makes a finding that the use of cannabis could create a danger to the defendant or others.

The Legislative Black Caucus recognizes that Black Marylanders make up the highest percentage of those incarcerated. This bill will reduce racial disparities and protect defendants and parolees from excessive restriction—making a modification in alignment with recent cannabis-related policy changes. By removing blanket cannabis-related prohibitions and penalties for individuals on probation or parole, the Legislature will help reduce racial disparities in our criminal justice system and modify practices to mirror recent policy changes in our State. For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland supports House Bill 980.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland