



February 16, 2023

Chairman Luke Clippinger,
Judiciary Committee
House Office Building, Room 101
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairman Luke Clippinger and Members of The Committee:

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland Inc. offers **favorable** support for House Bill 0980 –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. Cannabis prohibition and its enforcement have historically led to racial disparities in arrests and incarceration rates. Stopping individuals on probation or parole from being punished for cannabis use can help reduce these disparities and promote greater equity in the criminal justice system. For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland supports House Bill 980.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland