



March 8, 2023

Senate Finance Committee
Senator Melony Griffith, Chair
Senator Katherine Klausmeier, Vice Chair

Subject: Strong Opposition - SB 0516 Cannabis Reform, Favorable with Amendments

Dear Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Eric Steenstra. I am the Executive Director of Vote Hemp, a non-profit advocacy group that has worked to bring back hemp farming in Maryland as well as nationally. We worked with Del. Fraser-Hidalgo and stakeholders to pass hemp farming regulations that comply with the 2018 Farm Bill.

We have been speaking with Maryland farmers and businesses that have been growing and processing hemp and are very concerned that specific language in SB 516 will be devastating to the Maryland hemp industry and could eliminate it completely.

The specific language we are concerned with is the tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) milligram cap provision on page 69 which establishes a new and unreasonable limit on naturally derived THC in hemp products. The proposed THC limit is much lower than what is allowed in other states as well as federal law. Hemp products currently may contain a maximum of 0.3% THC which is far below what regulated cannabis products contain.

A THC mg cap is the wrong way to keep substandard, illegal or untested products off retail shelves and will destroy many small hemp businesses including family farms which have relied on the existing definition in Maryland and federal law to invest and build businesses.

We fully support reasonable regulation of hemp products such as is proposed in HB 1204 (Fraser-Hidalgo). We also support the Maryland cannabis industry and believe that their concerns can be addressed while also protecting the Maryland hemp industry.

We urge you to amend SB 516 by removing the THC mg cap provision and work with Del. Fraser-Hidalgo and stakeholders to address any concerns in a way that allows both the hemp and cannabis industries to co-exist and flourish. We do support SB 516 as written if the THC mg cap is removed.

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