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## **Maryland NORML Supports SB0928 Cannabis Legalization**

Maryland NORML is the state chapter of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws. As a grass-roots organization representing a broad range of Marylanders, we advocate for sensible, evidence based cannabis policy. We respectfully urge the MD Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee help end the “arrest and prosecute” response to cannabis consumption by voting in favor of SB0928.

States that have established regulated commercial cannabis markets have shown minimal effect on marijuana use by their citizens. According to the libertarian leaning Cato Institute: “The absence of significant adverse consequences is especially striking given the sometimes dire predictions made by legalization opponents.”<sup>1</sup> Arguments against cannabis legalization remain based on unsubstantiated claims, negative stereotypes, and fear.

Study after study dating back many decades conclude that cannabis consumption is *safer* than consuming alcohol and tobacco products. In fact, the President Richard Nixon appointed “Shafer Commission” issued a report in 1972 calling for the decriminalization of marijuana possession in the United States. As the long-standing marijuana prohibition movement begins to unravel, the country is rapidly moving towards national legalization. With Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Alaska, Colorado, Main, and Massachusetts now implementing regulatory systems for adult cannabis commercial transactions, it is only a matter of time.

SB0928 represents a culmination of the best policy provisions combined from other regulated cannabis markets. For example, as with the right to brew small amounts of beer for personal, non-commercial purposes, the right for adults to grow, possess, and consume cannabis in the privacy of their own home should be adopted without delay. There is no compelling state interest in infringing on an adult’s personal liberty to make this choice free from the fear of arrest, especially when this choice produces no discernible harm to other people. Another provision that deserves special mention is the proposed “craft cultivation” license category. This provision will provide economic opportunities to many Maryland small businesses, including

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<sup>1</sup> “Dose of Reality: The Effect of State Marijuana Legalizations” by Angela Dills, Sietse Goffard, and Jeffrey Miron (September 16, 2016)

our culturally vibrant small farm communities. The opportunity to cultivate unique, Maryland-specific cannabis brands offers our historic agricultural sector an opportunity to thrive in the new cannabis economy – projected to exceed \$20 billion nationally in fewer than 10 years.

The potential for Maryland-based entrepreneurs to gain the experience they need to compete in this emerging national cannabis economy is undermined the longer we wait to adopt a legal framework for our own cannabis market. We urge the Committee to support this comprehensive, effective regulatory system and establish a regulated cannabis market for Maryland without further delay.