

Eric Larson

Senate Finance Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Testimony Regarding House Bill 7126

Good Afternoon Chairman Abney,

While I respect the intent of this bill, I fear that the proposed redistribution of the funds in the Marijuana Trust Fund restricted receipt account is unfair as the Marijuana Trust Fund is already being exploited due to the existing statute.

This fund already has over a dozen designated purposes including fund programs and activities related to [the cannabis] program administration; revenue collection and enforcement; substance use disorder prevention for adults and youth; education and public awareness campaigns, including awareness campaigns relating to driving under the influence of cannabis; treatment and recovery support services; public health monitoring, research, data collection, and surveillance; law enforcement training and technology improvements, including grants to local law enforcement; and such other related uses that may be deemed necessary.

If this bill were to pass, it would be bypassing the other dedicated initiatives while also taking out at least 11% of what the fund has made since 2022 assuming there has been no other withdrawals. If there have been, that percentage increases exponentially.

While the original cannabis act can acknowledge the fiscal harms it perpetuated upon low income communities for nearly a century due to cannabis related laws, it refuses to fiscally atone for those harms. In addition to that, in the original RI Cannabis Act, interest earned from a fund designated for low-income cannabis business owners was initially supposed to stay in that fund but it was extracted in an amendment to serve the Marijuana Trust Fund.

While the requested use of the funds would be for the improvement of the same communities impacted by the War on Drugs, I'm concerned about cannabis funds being diverted for this when other funds could work.

Sincerely,

Eric Larson