

Senate Bill No. 700

CHAPTER 408

An act to amend Section 12954 of the Government Code, relating to employment discrimination.

[Approved by Governor October 7, 2023. Filed with Secretary of State October 7, 2023.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 700, Bradford. Employment discrimination: cannabis use.

Existing law, the California Fair Employment and Housing Act, prohibits various forms of employment discrimination and empowers the Civil Rights Department to investigate and prosecute complaints alleging unlawful practices. Existing law, on and after January 1, 2024, makes it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a person in hiring, termination, or any term or condition of employment, or otherwise penalize a person because of the person's use of cannabis off the job and away from the workplace, except as specified.

This bill would make it unlawful for an employer to request information from an applicant for employment relating to the applicant's prior use of cannabis, as specified. Under the bill, information about a person's prior cannabis use obtained from the person's criminal history would be exempt from the above-described existing law and bill provisions relating to prior cannabis use if the employer is permitted to consider or inquire about that information under a specified provision of the California Fair Employment and Housing Act or other state or federal law.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 12954 of the Government Code is amended to read:

12954. (a) (1) Except as specified in subdivision (c), it is unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a person in hiring, termination, or any term or condition of employment, or otherwise penalizing a person, if the discrimination is based upon any of the following:

(A) The person's use of cannabis off the job and away from the workplace. This paragraph does not prohibit an employer from discriminating in hiring, or any term or condition of employment, or otherwise penalize a person based on scientifically valid preemployment drug screening conducted through methods that do not screen for nonpsychoactive cannabis metabolites.

(B) An employer-required drug screening test that has found the person to have nonpsychoactive cannabis metabolites in their hair, blood, urine, or other bodily fluids.

(2) This subdivision does not apply to an employee in the building and construction trades.

(b) Except as specified in subdivision (c), it is unlawful for an employer to request information from an applicant for employment relating to the applicant's prior use of cannabis.

(c) Information about a person's prior cannabis use obtained from the person's criminal history is subject to subdivisions (a) and (b), unless the employer is permitted to consider or inquire about that information under Section 12952 or other state or federal law.

(d) This section does not permit an employee to possess, to be impaired by, or to use, cannabis on the job, or affect the rights or obligations of an employer to maintain a drug- and alcohol-free workplace, as specified in Section 11362.45 of the Health and Safety Code, or any other rights or obligations of an employer specified by state or federal law or regulation.

(e) This section does not preempt state or federal laws requiring applicants or employees to be tested for controlled substances, including laws and regulations requiring applicants or employees to be tested, or the manner in which they are tested, as a condition of employment, receiving federal funding or federal licensing-related benefits, or entering into a federal contract.

(f) This section does not apply to applicants or employees hired for positions that require a federal government background investigation or security clearance in accordance with regulations issued by the United States Department of Defense pursuant to Part 117 of Title 32 of the Code of Federal Regulations, or equivalent regulations applicable to other agencies.

(g) This section shall become operative on January 1, 2024.