

LAW, JUSTICE, AND ETHICS

Resolution LJE-20-23

A RESOLUTION ON CANNABIS EQUITY

WHEREAS, thirty-three states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Guam have all adopted laws allowing legal access to cannabis;

WHEREAS, eleven states and the District of Columbia, have adopted laws allowing for the adult-recreational use of cannabis;

WHEREAS, over 650,000 Americans were arrested for cannabis related offenses in 2017, and ninety percent of those were arrested for mere possession;

WHEREAS, the burdens of arrests, convictions, and long-term collateral consequences arising from a conviction fell disproportionately on Blacks and Latinos because cannabis was illegal;

WHEREAS, people who are Black, or Latino make up nearly 47 percent of those arrested for drug law violations, despite making up 31.5 percent of the American population;

WHEREAS, drug arrests and convictions have had a devastating impact on communities across the United States of America, particularly communities of color;

WHEREAS, persons convicted of drug related offenses and their families suffer the long-term consequences;

WHEREAS, these individuals have a more difficult time entering newly created adult-use cannabis markets due, in part, to a lack of access to capital, business space, technical support, and regulatory compliance assistance;

WHEREAS, only six states currently recognize social equity within the regulated cannabis industry and offer programs or support for cannabis equity;

WHEREAS, cannabis equity programs are necessary to reduce barriers to entering the cannabis industry for persons and communities most impacted;

WHEREAS, cannabis equity programs provide a wide range of services and resources such as technical assistance between state and local governments, financial support, priority processing of licenses, licensing fee waivers and deferrals, and other help for owners and employers from communities most harmed by the decades-long war on drugs;

WHEREAS, cannabis equity programs help ensure that business ownership and employment are diverse, reflective of the local demographics, and inclusive to all;

WHEREAS, support for local equity programs will not only help diversify the emerging cannabis market, it will also improve the growth of small businesses and directly benefit low-income, disadvantaged communities;

LAW, JUSTICE, AND ETHICS

Resolution LJE-20-23

WHEREAS, some states prioritize social equity within the cannabis industry, there is still a critical need for further assistance to those faced with the greatest challenges to licensure and the legalized, regulated market;

WHEREAS, cannabis equity programs increase public health and safety by encouraging individuals and groups that have or may be operating illegally to enter the regulated marketplace; and

WHEREAS, cannabis equity programs will increase the opportunities for more individuals to participate and contribute to their state and local economies' legal market, and support owners and operators so they have a chance to sustain a successful business.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) encourages states that have legalized cannabis in some form to support cannabis equity programs through laws and budgetary action; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States; the Vice President of the United States, members of the United States House of Representatives and United States Senate; and other federal and state government officials as appropriate.

SPONSOR: Senator Steven Bradford (CA)

Committee of Jurisdiction: Law, Justice, and Ethics Policy Committee

Certified by Committee Co-Chair: Representative Reginald Meeks (KY)

Ratified in Plenary Session: Ratification Date is December 6, 2019

Ratification is certified by: Representative Gilda Cobb-Hunter (SC), President