



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

MASSACHUSETTS BLACK AND LATINO LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS

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**MASSACHUSETTS BLACK AND LATINO LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS SECURES
PROTECTIONS AND ACCESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR IN MARIJUANA
LEGISLATION**

BOSTON – The Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus (MBLLC) celebrated a legislative victory in the passage of equity language in the comprehensive marijuana legislation entitled, *An Act to ensure the public health and safety of patient and consumer access to medical and adult use of marijuana in the Commonwealth* (H. 3776/ S. 2097). This newly-passed legislation sets regulatory framework for the new marijuana industry in Massachusetts.

Though the MBLLC maintains varying positions on the legalization of marijuana, members recognized the importance of securing provisions that mitigate the disproportionate impact on communities of failed “War on Drugs” policies. The MBLLC weighed in with Joint Committee on Marijuana Policy chairs, House and Senate leadership, and the Marijuana Conference Committee, and filed a series of legislative amendments aimed to promote inclusion of people of color and minority-owned businesses in cannabis-related industries and regulation.

“The MBLLC worked hard to ensure that our constituents have the opportunity to realize the full economic development potential the marijuana industry holds”, said **Representative Frank Moran (D-Lawrence)**, MBLLC Chair. *“Our Caucus extends its gratitude to Marijuana Policy chairs Senator Patricia Jehlen and Representative Mark Cusack, Speaker DeLeo, Senate President Rosenberg, and the members of Marijuana Conference Committee for the inclusion of diversity language and licensure provisions that restore equity in communities harmed by disproportionate marijuana prosecutions,”* said Representative Moran.

“This bill reflects a commitment to legalizing adult-use marijuana while upholding our duty to ensure safety, equity and effective management,” said **Speaker Robert DeLeo (D-Winthrop)**. *“I thank the Black and Latino Legislative Caucus for its work to strengthen this bill through a provision that encourages impactful participation in this new industry for communities that have been disproportionately affected by cannabis prohibition. Their voices and insight have proven invaluable throughout the legalization process”,* continued Speaker DeLeo.

“We have included meaningful provisions to ensure that communities who have been disproportionately impacted by the War on Drugs will be able to participate in the cannabis industry and provided an easier path for local farmers and local small businesses to participate”, said **Senate President Stan Rosenberg (D-Amherst)**. *“I am hopeful that this bill will be model legislation for other states who are contemplating legalization,”* said the Senate President.

Working with allies including the Minority Cannabis Business Association, the Equitable Opportunities NOW Coalition, and Boston City Councilor Ayanna Pressley, the MBLLC succeeded in securing the following equity provisions:

- The establishment of a study aimed to increase diversity in the marijuana industry and establish goals to promote the full industry participation of communities of color, women, and veterans;
- Supports for minority, women, and veteran owned businesses;

- Record sealing for individuals with prior marijuana convictions;
- Participation of persons with experience in minority business development; economic development strategies for under-resourced communities; social welfare or social justice; and criminal justice reform in the Cannabis Advisory Board;
- The creation of the Marijuana Regulation Fund to provide funding for restorative justice, jail diversion, workforce development, industry technical assistance, and other services for economically-disadvantaged persons;
- Priority status for marijuana license applicants with a demonstrated commitment to economic justice empowerment in high-need communities; and
- The removal of language prohibiting individuals from accessing opportunities in the new industry.

“These important provisions will ensure full participation of minority, women, and veteran businesses in this new market place within the Commonwealth and will lead to key investments in communities disproportionately affected by the War on Drugs,” said **Representative Mark Cusack (D-Braintree)**, Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on Marijuana Policy.

“We wanted to ensure that there would be opportunities in this new legal market for individuals in communities that have been deeply damaged by the War on Drugs. This legislation will make that happen. It will promote economic empowerment in these communities and help those who qualify have their records sealed. The bill will also direct funds towards these communities for restorative justice, jail diversion, workforce development, and technical business assistance,” said **Senator Patricia Jehlen (D-Somerville)**, Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on Marijuana Policy. *“Too little attention has been paid to the social justice aspects of this bill, but I am grateful to the Massachusetts Black and Latino Caucus promoting them and continuing to fight for them throughout this process.”*

Overall, the MBLLC provisions will ensure that the jobs and wealth building opportunities that this industry creates benefit all Massachusetts residents. The comprehensive marijuana legislation passed the House of Representatives and the Senate this week and now moves to the Governor’s desk for signature.

For more information on the Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus, please visit:
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