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Social Equity Provisions in proposed legislation to legalize adult-use cannabis. SB 316/HB 2353

The law will create procedures and policies to promote and encourage full participation in the cannabis industry for communities that have been disproportionately harmed by the War on Drugs. Licensed cannabis businesses will be required to file a diversity plan to inform, hire, and educate minorities, women, the disabled and veterans and will be held accountable for compliance with that plan.

In many ways, the law allows local decision makers to establish how the cannabis industry will look in their communities – or whether it may even exist. Local jurisdictions may prohibit or restrict the cannabis industry from operating or they may encourage a thriving commercial marketplace. Cannabis establishments, however, may not be located closer than 1500ft apart.

Matters of Social Equity will be addressed within *three* distinct arenas:

Criminal Justice, Economic Empowerment Opportunities and Community Restoration.

Criminal Justice. The law mandates Expungement of prior convictions for individuals who have been convicted of a class 4 felony or any misdemeanor violation of the Cannabis Control Act. Prior expungeable convictions for possession will not prohibit ownership of or employment in the cannabis industry.

Economic Empowerment Opportunities. In addition to the licenses for Cultivators and Dispensaries, three new categories of licensing will be established. These will require less up-front capital for those wishing to enter the cannabis industry. The guiding objective is to create opportunities that are sustainable and successful.

- Craft Grower License – smaller scale allows for flexible locations for site;
- Processing License – opportunities for varying size and scope of production;
- Transporter License – reduced capital requirements and limited overhead needed.

Community Restoration. This legislation establishes the Restoring Our Communities (ROC) program to allocate part of the funds generated by the cannabis excise tax to address disinvestment in communities ravaged by mass incarceration and violence. The program, under the oversight of a ROC Board, will identify areas of need and work with community-based groups in the planning and implementation of grants to reduce violence and promote economic opportunities for highest risk individuals in highest risk Illinois communities.

Revenue will fund public education campaigns regarding safe and legal use of cannabis products as well as treatment for mental health and substance abuse.