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April 8, 2025

Representative Joseph Solomon, Committee Chair
Members of the House Corporations Committee
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903
Sent via email: housecorporations@rilegislature.gov

Re: Written Testimony in Support of House Bill #H5829 – Rhode Island Cannabis Act Amendments

Dear Representative Solomon and members of the House Corporations Committee,

My name is Blake Johnson, Esq. and I am a lifelong resident of the South Side of Providence, one of the very communities most impacted by the War on Drugs. I am also a member of the Cannabis Policy Coalition (CPC), and an attorney with Green Path Legal—a law firm committed to Rhode Island's and Massachusetts' cannabis industry. I am writing this testimony on behalf of myself and the entire Green Path Legal team in strong support of the proposed amendments to the Rhode Island Cannabis Act, House Bill #H5829.

The current version of the Rhode Island Cannabis Act acknowledges that the War on Drugs caused “irreparable harm” to disadvantaged communities. However, that acknowledgment has not translated into meaningful action. The existing law falls short in ensuring that restorative justice is at least a part of our state's cannabis industry, if not at the center. The proposed amendments are a critical step toward fulfilling that original promise.

One of the most important changes in the amendment is the tightening of the qualifications for social equity applicants. As someone who has worked closely with individuals and families truly impacted by prohibition-era policies, I have seen firsthand how easily these designations can be misused or co-opted by those with no real ties to the harms the law was designed to address.

These amendments create necessary safeguards to ensure that social equity licenses are awarded to those who genuinely deserve the opportunity—to people who have lived the consequences of over-policing, incarceration, and generational disinvestment.

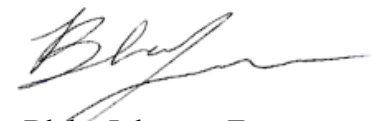
Just as importantly, this bill proposes allocating a portion of cannabis tax revenue back into the communities harmed most. This is not charity—it is justice. That revenue can and should be used to reinvest in public housing, education, workforce development, and reentry services. Communities like mine on the South Side of Providence need real, tangible investments, not empty promises. The cannabis economy exists today because of the sacrifices and suffering of communities that were criminalized for engaging with the very same plant that now generates millions in legal revenue. It is only fair and just that those same communities share in the wealth being created.

As a cannabis attorney, and a CPC founder, I've worked alongside advocates, entrepreneurs, and everyday Rhode Islanders who want nothing more than a fair chance to participate in this new industry. They do not want handouts—they want opportunity, support, and a level playing field. This bill helps make that possible.

Passing these amendments would demonstrate Rhode Island's commitment to restorative justice, community reinvestment, and the long-term success of an equitable cannabis industry. I urge you not to miss this chance to make the Cannabis Act live up to its original vision.

Please send this bill to the floor with a recommendation of passage. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



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