

April 8, 2025

**Chair Joseph J. Solomon, Jr. and Members of the House Corporations Committee,**

My name is Nicole Tingle. I am a Providence resident, civil rights advocate, and Political Action Chair of the Rhode Island Coalition of Black Women. I'm writing in support of House Bill #5829.

Authors of the original RI Cannabis Act, called for the "equitable administration and regulation" of cannabis. HB #5829 ensures there's a clause that prevents exploitation of social equity licenses. The social equity licenses were designed for people harmed by the War on Drugs in Rhode Island and it's imperative that they function as such.

While the original Act includes positive measures like the Social Equity Assistance Program, the current structure has limitations and an opportunity for a huge improvement for investments into communities deeply impacted historically by the War on Drugs in Rhode Island.

To my understanding, the average cannabis dispensary requires \$1 to \$2 million in start-up capital. The current fund holds just over \$1.5 million, with limited growth projected. If HB #5829 is passed, its projected that the equity fund amount would grow to **\$135 million by 2034**—all while the General Fund would still retain **\$417 million** from cannabis taxes.

H5829 would also establish a **Disproportionately Impacted Areas Investment Fund** to support public education, housing, and health in communities most affected by the War on Drugs—such as Providence, Central Falls, Woonsocket, and specific census tracts in Newport and Pawtucket, as defined by the Cannabis Control Commission.

A small portion of cannabis tax revenue could make a huge impact across Rhode Island. By passing this bill we have an opportunity to lead the nation in equitable cannabis reform, while investing in the very communities that were once torn down by prohibition.

I urge members of the House Corporations Committee, to pass H5829. This bill is more than policy—it's an investment in Rhode Island's future.

Sincerely,

Nicole Tingle