



Green Path Legal  
RI Office: 15 Bay Spring Avenue, Barrington, RI, 02806  
MA Office: 140 N Walker St, Unit 513, Taunton, MA, 02780  
<https://www.greenpathlegal.com/>

Megan E. Sheehan, Esq. \*  
Christine D’Orsi Fitta, Esq. \*  
Blake Johnson, Esq. \*

---

*Law Clerks*  
Samantha Bailey

Megan@greenpathlegal.com  
Info@greenpathlegal.com

---

*Administrative Support*  
Julia Soares  
Nikki Perez

January 28, 2026

Jamie Plume  
Committee Clerk  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Sent via email: SenateFinance@rilegislature.gov

Re: Written Testimony in Opposition to House Bill No. 7126  
Regarding Section 8 – Transfer of Marijuana Trust Fund Monies to the General Fund

Dear Ms./Mr. Plume,

My name is Attorney Blake Johnson, and I respectfully submit this written testimony in opposition to Section 8 of House Bill No. 7126, which proposes transferring five million dollars (\$5,000,000) from the Marijuana Trust Fund restricted receipt account to the General Fund by June 30, 2026.

While the State’s fiscal needs are real, diverting these funds to the General Fund undermines the express intent of the Rhode Island Cannabis Act and threatens to undo the limited progress this State has made toward repairing the documented and acknowledged harms caused by the War on Drugs.

The General Assembly has already made a clear and unequivocal finding that cannabis prohibition “created irreparable harm to individuals, families, and communities that were disproportionately impacted by marijuana prohibition and enforcement.” That recognition was not symbolic. It was the foundation for creating a social equity framework designed to provide meaningful opportunity, access to capital, and long-term stability for individuals from disproportionately impacted areas who were historically excluded from the legal cannabis

market.

The Social Equity Assistance Fund is a critical component of that framework. However, in its current form, the fund is not sustainable. The existing funding structure is insufficient to meet the demand placed upon it and will fail before it has a chance to fulfill its statutory purpose. Redirecting five million dollars away from the Marijuana Trust Fund and into the General Fund will accelerate that failure and effectively convert the State's equity commitments into empty promises.

Placing these funds into the General Fund does not guarantee they will address the very harms the State has already acknowledged. General Fund appropriations are subject to annual budget pressures and competing priorities, none of which are required to account for the lasting consequences of discriminatory drug enforcement. Once these funds are transferred, the connection between cannabis-generated revenue and cannabis-related harm is permanently severed.

A more principled and fiscally responsible approach would be to reinvest these funds directly into (1) the existing Social Equity Assistance Fund and (2) a newly created Disproportionately Impacted Areas Investment Fund.

First, bolstering the Social Equity Assistance Fund would ensure that social equity applicants have access to the technical assistance, capital support, and operational resources necessary to survive in a highly regulated and capital-intensive industry. Without sustained funding, social equity licenses risk becoming nominal designations rather than viable pathways to ownership and generational wealth.

Second, the creation of a Disproportionately Impacted Areas Investment Fund would allow the State to directly address the broader community-level harms caused by the War on Drugs. This fund could support workforce development, reentry services, small business financing, and community reinvestment initiatives in neighborhoods that bore the brunt of criminalization. Such a fund would align squarely with the General Assembly's stated intent and ensure cannabis revenues are used to repair, rather than merely acknowledge, past harm.

Importantly, reinvesting Marijuana Trust Fund dollars into equity-focused funds is not an act of special treatment; it is an act of legislative consistency. The cannabis market exists because the State chose to legalize and regulate a substance it once criminalized. Equity is not ancillary to that decision—it is central to its legitimacy.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Senate to reject Section 8 of House Bill No. 7126 as drafted and instead amend the bill to preserve these funds for their intended purpose. Rhode Island has the opportunity to demonstrate that its commitment to social equity is durable, intentional, and backed by real investment—not contingent on surplus or convenience.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Blake Johnson, Esq  
blake@greenpathlegal.com  
(401) 396 - 9113