



The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
728 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James Inhofe
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
205 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2264 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Ranking Members
House Armed Services Committee
2469 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

December 2, 2021

Dear Chairmen Reed and Smith, and Ranking Members Inhofe and Rogers:

We are a coalition of organizations representing Black and Brown cannabis activists, business owners, and community leaders. Recent days have brought each one of us to a breaking point as we scramble to protect and support minority operators in the Bay Area who have been decimated and traumatized by acts of coordinated violence. The Bay Area minority cannabis community is a leader and beacon of hope for all who seek economic justice through the cannabis industry. Without access to capital or insurance or support from law enforcement, however, they are literally and figuratively fighting for their lives. We ask you to stand with them and remove barriers to access to the resources needed to protect and rebuild their businesses and restore their chosen path to justice. To do so, we implore you to keep the “Secure and Fair Enforcement (SAFE) Banking Act” in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Doing so would give Black and Brown people a chance to safely achieve economic justice and restoration through the legal cannabis industry.

With each day, we see the ability of people of color to participate in the cannabis industry slipping further away due to lack of access to the resources and capital necessary to start, and safely operate. Even in states with social equity programs, the ability to operate at all, let alone safely, is a major challenge. For instance, New Jersey’s cannabis industry is already unfolding inequitably, with the first round of licenses going to few true minority owners and substantial barriers to entry surmountable only to well-funded and well-connected operators. New York has promised to issue 50% of its cannabis licenses to diverse entrepreneurs but without access to capital to overcome navigate a framework that favors large operators the individuals most impacted by cannabis prohibition will again be shut out. Illinois legalization was heralded as a leader in social equity but

has yielded few minority operators. One Illinois operator received much-needed financial relief by way of a check, a check they could not cash because they could not access a bank account.

If we do not seize the opportunity to include SAFE Banking in the NDAA, how much longer must we wait for relief so our members can afford to protect themselves through access to the banking system? Next Congress? Five years from now? Longer? With every passing month, the cannabis industry becomes more expensive, more dangerous, and less accessible and sustainable for minority entrepreneurs, even in states with social equity programs. We urge you to help protect thousands of Americans from violent crime.

Sincerely,

Marijuana Matters

Minorities 4 Medical Marijuana

Minority Cannabis Business Association

WomenGrow

Asian Americans for Cannabis Education

California Minority Alliance

