



The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-221, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cory Booker  
717 Hart Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

December 2, 2021

Dear Leader Schumer, and Senators Booker and Wyden:

We are a coalition of organizations representing Black and Brown cannabis activists, business owners, and community leaders. For more than two decades, states have passed cannabis laws with the promise of social equity, but, by and large, these promises have proven empty. Instead, the individuals most impacted by cannabis prohibition remain shut out of the cannabis industry, or worse yet, further victimized by predatory partners and investors. Those fortunate enough to operate in the industry face the risk of violence daily.

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 rebuild their businesses and restore their chosen path to justice. To do so, we implore you to support inclusion of the "Secure and Fair Enforcement (SAFE) Banking Act" in the final version of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to give Black and Brown people a chance to safely achieve economic justice and restoration through the legal cannabis industry.

Our members and communities want a chance to participate in an industry built on our backs. With each day, we see that chance slipping further away due to lack of access to the resources and capital necessary to start, and safely operate, businesses in the cannabis industry, even in states with social equity programs. 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.

We stand with you in the fight for equitable, just, comprehensive cannabis reform because we represent not only the communities most impacted by prohibition but the communities most impacted by legalization. We will continue to fight to ensure that no comprehensive bill passes without deep roots in restorative justice, the breadth of which matches the breadth of the harm of decades of unjust cannabis policy. From the time that each of our organizations proudly joined your offices to discuss the Cannabis Administration and Opportunity Act, the situation across the country has grown more dire. For some it is now life and death. This path to ending federal legalization is a long road and we are proud to walk beside you to the end. However, without help now, most minority business, some in our community, will not make it to that day.

If we do not seize the opportunity to include SAFE Banking in the NDAA, how much longer must we wait for relief? 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.

Your commitment to achieving justice through cannabis reform is unparalleled. For justice to be complete, however, we must ensure the individuals most impacted by cannabis prohibition, including the operators struggling around the country right now, have a chance to safely achieve economic justice and restoration through the legal cannabis industry by passing the SAFE Banking Act.

Sincerely,

Marijuana Matters

Minorities 4 Medical Marijuana

Minority Cannabis Business Association

WomenGrow

Asian Americans for Cannabis Education

California Minority Alliance

