

May 3, 2021

Dear Members of the D.C. Council and Mayor Bowser:

We urge you to vote yes on Councilmember Robert White's "Returning Citizens Cannabis Equity Emergency Declaration Resolution" with accompanying emergency and temporary legislation to set aside medical marijuana facility registrations specifically for medical marijuana facilities owned by returning citizens. This legislation gives returning citizens who were previously incarcerated for the manufacture or distribution of a controlled substance equitable access to the District's medical marijuana program and thereby compensates for the use of marijuana laws to arrest and incarcerate Black residents.

The District's criminalization of marijuana unjustly and disproportionately targets Black residents. [Black residents accounted for 90% of marijuana arrests in D.C. from 2009 to 2011](#) despite much smaller disparities in surveyed drug use rates across races. Without this legislation, returning citizens, who are almost all Black residents, would be excluded from operating medical marijuana facilities after being subject to over-policing, sentencing disparities, and overturned drug laws. Returning citizens deserve prioritization for the remainder of medical marijuana facility registrations.

The D.C. Council must VOTE YES on Tuesday on the "Returning Citizens Cannabis Equity Emergency Declaration Resolution," "Returning Citizens Cannabis Equity Emergency Amendment Act of 2021," and "Returning Citizens Cannabis Equity Temporary Amendment Act of 2021."

Sincerely,

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Civil Rights and Urban Affairs  
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