

# ILLINOIS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## Emanuel Chris Welch State Representative • 7th District

July 16, 2020

Governor J.B. Pritzker  
James R. Thompson Center  
100 W. Randolph, 16-100  
Chicago, IL 60601

Dear Gov. Pritzker,

We are in the midst of a unique historical moment with the eyes of the nation turned toward our society's urgent need for racial justice for African Americans. But we can't achieve racial justice without ensuring economic justice and opportunity for Black entrepreneurs and Black businesses.

Last year, Illinois took an historic step towards economic and racial justice by passing the most progressive legalization of recreational adult-use cannabis in America. As part of this critical effort, advocates worked across partisan lines, regional interests, and parochial concerns to develop the first marijuana law in our country that put social justice at the forefront for ensuring equal access to the budding recreational cannabis industry.

In the spirit of our current movement for Black lives and the legacy of past movements for civil rights, economic justice, and racial equality, I am urging your administration to ensure that social equity licenses for marijuana dispensaries are awarded to businesses and entrepreneurs that are truly owned and operated by members of disadvantaged and historically disenfranchised communities. Unfortunately, we have seen straw ownership schemes in other states seek to undermine the very people and communities that social equity laws are designed to lift up.

At a time when Black Americans and Black-owned businesses have suffered disproportionately from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative that Illinois ensure ownership in social equity-licensed dispensaries is real and tangible, helping to create new avenues of wealth and community investment. As you put it last year to *Crain's Chicago Business*, "I want to create millionaires in communities that have been left out and left behind." Those millionaires won't be

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created and those communities will continue to be left out and left behind if social equity licenses are gamed by corporations operating in bad faith under the cover of social justice.

I strongly urge you and your administration to ensure that applicants seeking social equity licenses under the guise of Black ownership are truly owned and operated by African Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Emanuel C. Welch".

Emanuel Chris Welch  
State Representative - 7th District