



CITY OF CHICAGO
CITY COUNCIL

★
JAMES M. GARDINER
ALDERMAN, 45th WARD

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS
AVIATION
COMMITTEES AND RULES
LICENSE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION
PUBLIC SAFETY
SPECIAL EVENT, CULTURAL AFFAIRS
AND RECREATION

To: Members of the Chicago City Council Black Caucus
From: Jim Gardiner, Alderman, 45th Ward
RE: Columbia Care's application for a zoning change in the 45th Ward

I respectfully request your support for Columbia Care's application for a zoning change in the 45th Ward to allow this existing dispensary to expand into an adjacent storefront. As you know, the City Council has a long tradition deferring to the local alderman on matters of zoning and land use within their wards.

I understand you have serious concerns regarding the manner in which licenses to cultivate and sell cannabis have been issued since the State of Illinois legalized the sale and consumption of cannabis. I share those concerns and strongly support your efforts to ensure that future licenses are distributed to social equity applicants. I understand and respect that some members of the Black Caucus may feel obligated to depart from the longstanding tradition of aldermanic prerogative and vote against the zoning change to underscore your anger and frustration at the lack of progress in issuing cannabis licenses to social equity applicants. I respectfully request, however, as a friend and colleague, that you not resort to the measure of exercising your right to move to deferring and publish the ordinance.

By expanding its business footprint, Columbia Care will be able to increase its sales, which will result in **over \$100,000 a month in additional sales tax revenue** at a time when we badly need the revenue. To put it another way, even a month's delay in obtaining the license will cost taxpayers \$100,000 in lost revenue.

Columbia Care is a nationwide publicly held corporation. Unlike a traditional Limited Liability Corporation who may have a handful of owners, Columbia owners are its thousands of shareholders. As a corporation, however, Columbia Care has demonstrated a strong commitment to social equity. Below are some real life examples of its commitment:

- Columbia Care has incubated two social equity dispensary applicants based in Chicago. As an incubator, Columbia Care is a minority (non-controlling) partner who help put together their applications, provide capital, and offer much of their cannabis knowledge and expertise to ensure that the applicants secure a license and then are actually successful in setting up and running their dispensary in Chicago. The social equity applicants include:

- Green Room Social Equity Partners, a group of social equity applicants with Chicago ties, a majority of who are Black. They qualify on a mix of residency, persons of color and parents with convictions equity criteria.
- Michael Malcolm, an African American applicant who qualified due to a past cannabis conviction. Mr. Malcolm has continued to develop his ancillary businesses despite the state's delays in issuing social equity dispensary licenses, including a new line of rolling trays that Columbia Care will be carrying in its stores.
- Columbia Care's staff is diverse and it will continue to seek diverse applicants in the eight new positions created by the expansion.
 - The Jefferson Park staff is 32% Hispanic (including the General Manager), 23% African American, 4% Asian, and 5% non-binary, including the general manager.
 - At the highest level, Columbia Care's Board is 14% African American and 14% female. Board member Frank Savage is the former Chairman of Howard University
 - Internally, Columbia Care has had a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) committee for two years. This year's focus is on promoting DEI in recruitment and building a national supplier diversity program.
- Columbia Care's outreach in support of DEI initiatives is ongoing nationally and locally
 - Nationally
 - An executive of color at Columbia Care is its representative on the Cannabis Trade Federation's DEI Task Force, which included signing on to always support criminal justice reforms, social equity licensing programs and having robust internal DEI efforts.
 - Member of the Minority Cannabis Business Association Policy Committee.
 - Community college workforce development seminars on navigating the cannabis industry
 - Locally worked with All of Us or None in Illinois to provide webinars on cannabis business and employment opportunities for returning citizens. Topics covered cannabis employment and ancillary business opportunities, such as accounting and real estate. Columbia Care has made an annual contribution of \$5,000 to the group for the last two years in addition to the programming.

Columbia Care has demonstrated that it is a good corporate citizen and is fully committed to the goals of creating real opportunities in the cannabis industry for social equity applicants, including those from the African American community.

For these reasons, I respectfully request your support.

Proudly serving,


Alderman James Gardiner

