



The Future of Cannabis in New Jersey: A Report Prepared by the Students of Rider University's Reefer Madness Course

Full Course Title: Reefer Madness: From Panic to Profit

Course Dates: Sept 30 until December 3, 2020

Professor: Dr. Sarah Trocchio, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology and Criminology

Course Description: This seminar course explores drug policy in America through the lens of cannabis. Theoretical and empirical arguments for, and consequences of, prohibition and legalization will be considered, with special attention to the race, class, and gender.

Opportunities and challenges springing from recent legal reforms and a rapidly expanding legal industry will be considered. This course provided students the opportunity to participate in hands-on consulting projects with industry mentors pertaining to the most pressing issues in the debate on legalization in New Jersey.

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Course Mentors:

- Dr. Marion McNabb, President, Cannabis Center of Excellence
- DJ Ritter, Data Scientist Cannabis Center of Excellence
- Marshall Ogen, CannabisBPO
- Shekia Scott, Cannabis and Social Equity Expert

BACKGROUND

Dr. Trocchio's "Reefer Madness" at Rider University course taught Fall Semester 2020 focused on marijuana drug policy in the United States, with the ultimate goal of giving students a comprehensive understanding of modern New Jersey marijuana legislation. Central to this course was a semester-long, Engaged-Learning-approved project completed in topic-specific teams that worked with industry experts. Project consulting teams focused on the following areas: 1) Cannabis and Public Health, 2) Cannabis and Social Equity, and 3) Voter Advocacy. The Public Health team focused on the positive impacts medical cannabis usage has on patients of all ages and backgrounds. The Social Equity team focused on creating reparative justice for those criminalized by the War on Drugs, drafting equity recommendations for the cannabis industry. Lastly, the Voter Advocacy team worked with both teams to analyze emerging data taken from the survey research undertaken earlier in the class, in order to develop and disseminate a voter education campaign before the November 3rd ballot vote on legalizing adult use. Our expert mentors included: Dr. Marion McNabb, Shekia Scott, and Marshall Ogen. Dr. Marion McNabb, who is President of Cannabis Center of Excellence INC, a 501c3 nonprofit organization that conducts citizen-science focused population studies and programs in the areas of community engagement, medical cannabis, adult-use cannabis, and social justice in the cannabis industry, was the mentor for the Public Health Team. Shekia Scott, a former Director of Community Outreach & Social Equity Program at the Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission, who also co-founded the Boston Police Camera Action Team, leading to her service as Policy Director & Neighborhood Liaison for Boston City Councilor, was the mentor for the Social Equity Team. Marshall Ogen, the VP of Business Strategy for CannabisBPO strategic advisor to the New Jersey CannaBusiness Association, a member of the National Cannabis Industry

Association (NCIA) Marketing and Advertising Committee and the co-chair of the Mid-Atlantic Professional Association of Customer Experience (PACE), was the mentor for the Voter Education Campaign Team.

STUDY DESCRIPTION

Our course conducted a research study that collected anonymous opinions from New Jersey residents regarding legalizing cannabis for recreational purposes within the state of New Jersey for individuals 21+ years of age and the role of social justice in legalization. The study also looked at the effects cannabis has on individuals from a medicinal perspective, including its side effects. In order to gather this information, we utilized a survey via Survey Monkey that was constructed in early fall, and disseminated at the end of September via various social media platforms, email, veteran associations and marijuana dispensaries throughout the state of New Jersey. The survey consisted of 240 people total, ages 18 and older.

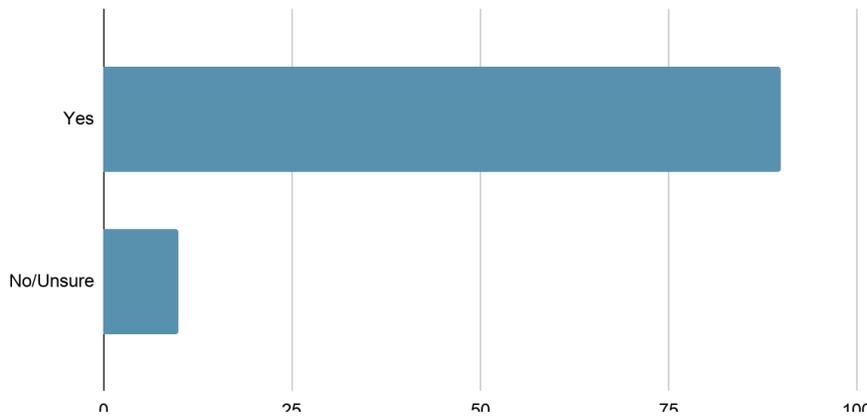
Additionally, this study draws a particular focus on evaluating support for a legal cannabis industry to advance social equity aims, and the data was gathered through quantitative means in an IRB approved survey. This information was divided amongst three different categories: Public Health, Social Equity and Voter Education. Each individual group was led by a mentor with significant experience within the cannabis industry. Through the mentors extensive experience, each group was able to flourish within their respective topic areas through guided research. These topics will affect New Jersey in various ways, leading to economic growth, decriminalization, and aim to

provide equity in the legal cannabis industry for the BIPOC communities. Data was analyzed using R and key findings are presented below.

KEY FINDINGS FROM STUDY

The study was launched from Sept 30 until November 3, 2020. Overall, 240 New Jersey

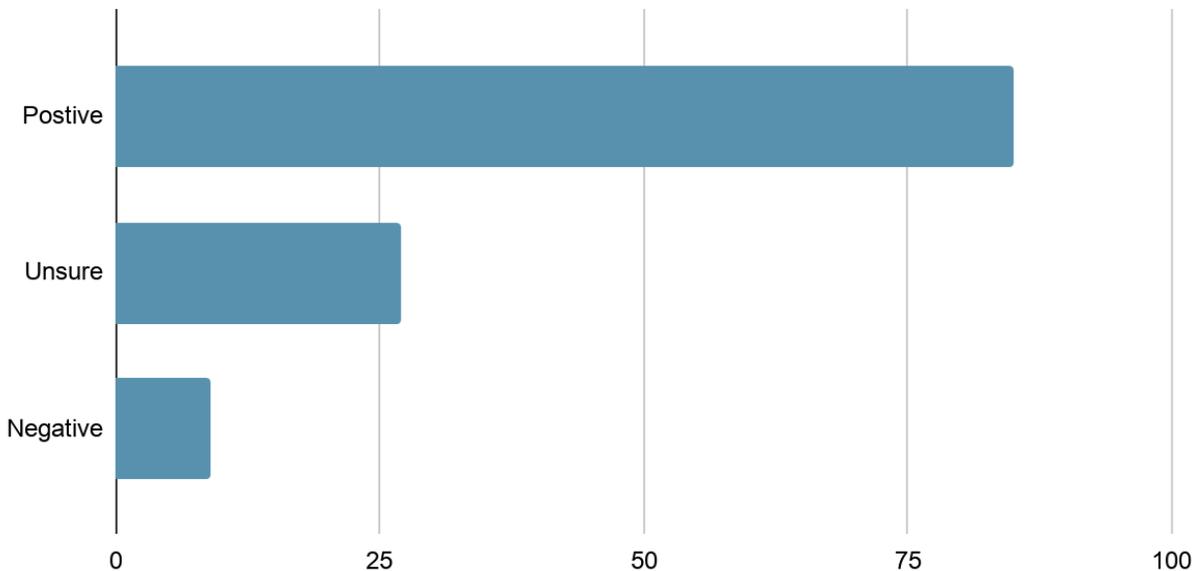
In your opinion, do you think cannabis should be legal for adult (21+ years) recreational use in New Jersey?



residents completed the anonymous survey online.

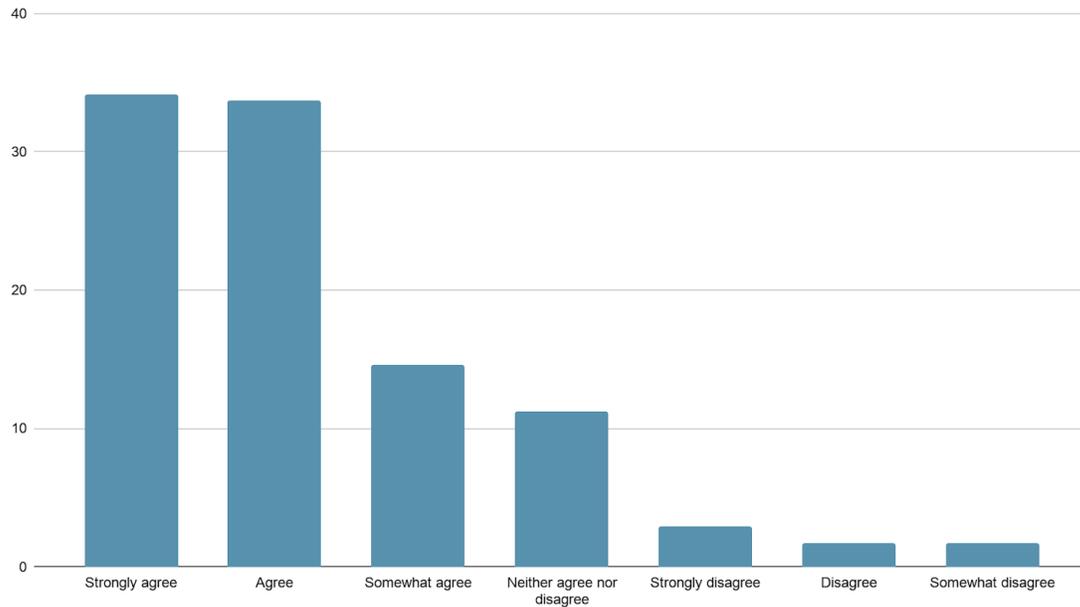
Of those who completed the survey, 180 (75%) reported being white, non-hispanic, 89% Latino, 8% Black,

How do you think legalizing cannabis would affect the economic conditions of New Jersey?



followed by other races. In the sample, the majority were female (64%) and all from New Jersey over the age of 21 years, and 99% were registered to vote. Of those who responded, the vast majority (90%) were in favor of legalizing cannabis for adult use. Most people think legalizing cannabis would affect the economy in a positive way (85%). In our sample, 27% people were unsure, and 9 respondents (3.75%) said that they believe legalizing cannabis would affect the economy in a negative way. In terms of social equity, 69% said that legalizing cannabis would change or affect racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal justice system in New Jersey. In our sample, 90% reported that they were familiar with the war on drugs, and 68% reported that the war on drugs was not successful. When asked if New Jersey should have a strong social equity program if cannabis is legalized, 65% reported they agree or strongly agree; and 68% of our sample believe those with a previous cannabis conviction should have access to participate in the industry for the workforce.

"(%)A social equity and restorative justice program should be included in the existing medical cannabis regulations and program in New Jersey."

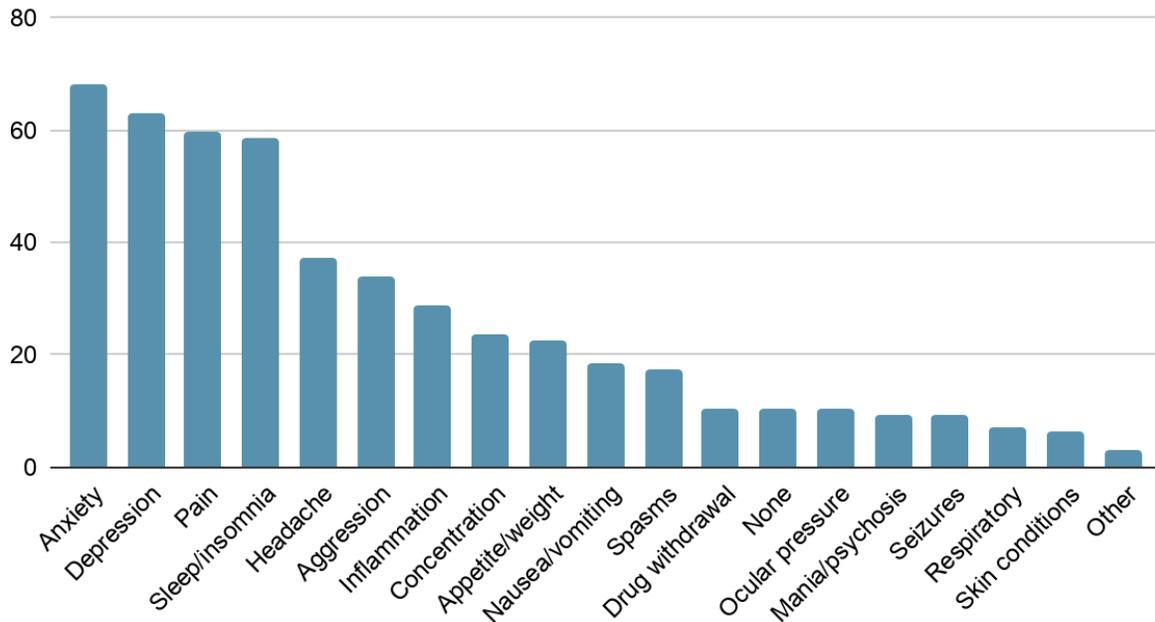


In the sample, respondents were asked how much they agree a social equity and restorative justice program should be included in the existing medical cannabis regulations and program in New Jersey. Strongly Agree 34%, Agree 33%, Somewhat Agree 15%, Neither 11%, Strongly Disagree 3%, Somewhat Disagree, and Disagree 2%.

In our sample, 60% agreed New Jersey should implement a loan or grant fund to support those negatively impacted by the war on drugs. 78% believe that New Jersey should prioritize expungement of prior cannabis records, 93% believe that small amounts of cannabis should be decriminalized. 55% believe that cannabis should allow for social consumption of adult use cannabis.

59% of our sample did not want to work in the cannabis industry, and 29% believed that cost of licensing or regulatory fees would be the top barrier for social equity in the industry.

Cannabis Treats These Conditions the Best



In our study, 40% reported consuming cannabis, 53% were non-cannabis consumers and 7% did not want to disclose. Of those who reported consuming cannabis, 54% reported consuming for adult use purposes only, 32% only used cannabis for medical purposes, and 11% consumed both medically and recreationally. Of the health conditions for which cannabis was cited to be helpful, anxiety (70%), depression (55%), pain (35%), and insomnia (42%) were the most common.

Cannabis is reported to help with anxiety (68%), depression (63%), Pain 60%, sleep/insomnia (59%) and headaches 37%. Most common unwanted side effects include Dry Mouth (50%), changes in appetite (40%) and more or less talkative 32%.

Respondents prefer to use edibles most (64%) followed by smoking flower (61%) and vape carts (40%) followed by vaping flower (11%).

Barriers to accessing the right products include: 44% access to the right products, 31% money to purchase products, 29% no barriers, 24% stigma, 19% money required to get a medical card.

Table 1: Cannabis Impacts Daily Life (select all that apply)

Indicator	%
Helps with psychological symptoms (anxiety, stress, calm, sadness, energy)	56
Generally helped with quality of life	45
Helped with physical symptoms (body pains, function, sensation)	40
Helps to reduce use of alcohol	29
Helps me currently reduce over the counter medications	24
Helps me currently reduce the use of prescription medications	23
Helps to avoid starting other medicines (including opiates)	19

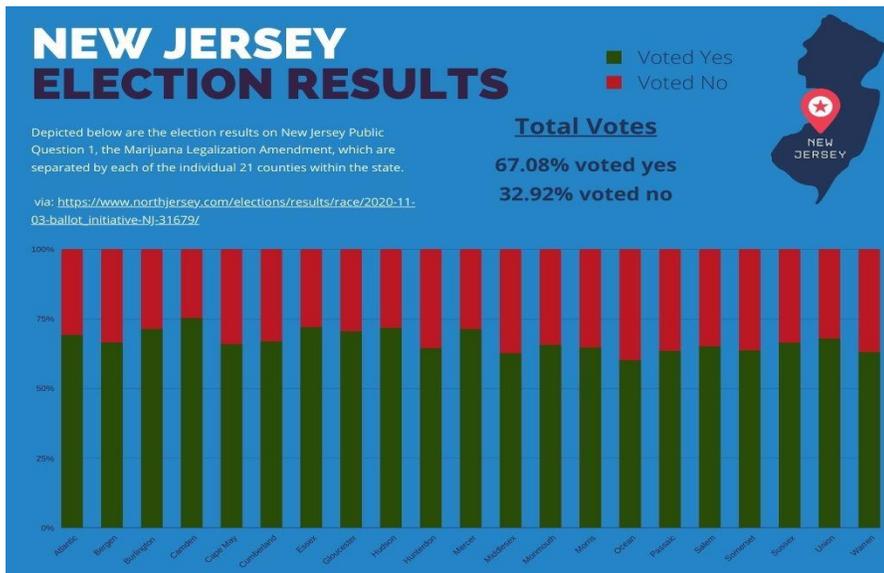
Cannabis has had no impact on my life	18
Helps to reduce use of over the counter or prescription medications in the past	17
Helps to reduce use of tobacco	12
Helps to reduce use of opiates	9
Other (please specify)	7
Has not helped my daily life	3

SUMMARY OF NJ ELECTION RESULTS

New Jersey Public Question 1, the Marijuana Legalization Amendment, has been approved, in which this legalizes the possession of marijuana for those ages 21 and older along with the legalization of cultivation, processing, and the retail sale of marijuana. All in all, a total 67.08% of New Jersey voters or 2,737,674 people were in favor of the legalization of marijuana, whereas 32.92% or 1,343,603 people were opposed to the amendment (<https://www.nj.com/politics/2020/11/live-results-nj-marijuana-ballot-question-2-other-public-questions.html>). Back when Governor Phil Murphy was campaigning for the position in 2017, he promised to legalize marijuana within his first 100 days in office. However, there just simply wasn't enough votes to pass the legislation. That being said, getting this public question to the ballot for the people of New Jersey to decide was an accomplishment in itself and now being that the legislation has officially been passed, we're a step closer to creating positive change.

The leading cities in the pre-legalization of cannabis were Newark 71.8% yes, Trenton 71.0% yes, and Atlantic City 69.1%. The leading counties are Burlington and Camden County, with Burlington at 71.1 % and Camden at 75.3%. As lawmakers debate and monitor ways of implementing cannabis policy, the leading counties and people therein should also be considered.

For instance, Trenton, one of the top cities to vote for cannabis legalization, started a campaign called “94 No More”. This campaign has been bringing together crucial members in the cannabis industry and policy makers including Senator Nicholas Scutari, Assemblyman Jamel C. Holley, the New Jersey CannaBusiness Association (NJCBA), the American Civil Liberties Union of NJ (ACLU-NJ Division), the New Jersey United for Marijuana Reform, the Minorities for Medical Marijuana, the United Food & Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 152, the Coalition for Medical Marijuana-New Jersey, and Doctors for Cannabis Regulation since 2019 to tackle disproportionate effects of current policy. As a voter advocacy group and, as the data suggest, policymakers should look towards inner cities such as Trenton, Newark, and even Atlantic City, as these cities have high rates of inadequate incarceration, cannabis usage, and BIPOC individuals.



STATUS OF THE LAW AS OF DECEMBER 2020

Pre Legalization-before election and Current until new legalization is written and passed. On November 3rd, 2020 New Jersey decided that Marijuana will be legalized as of January 1, 2021 for recreational use for adults 21 or older. Prior to this legalization we had a Compassionate

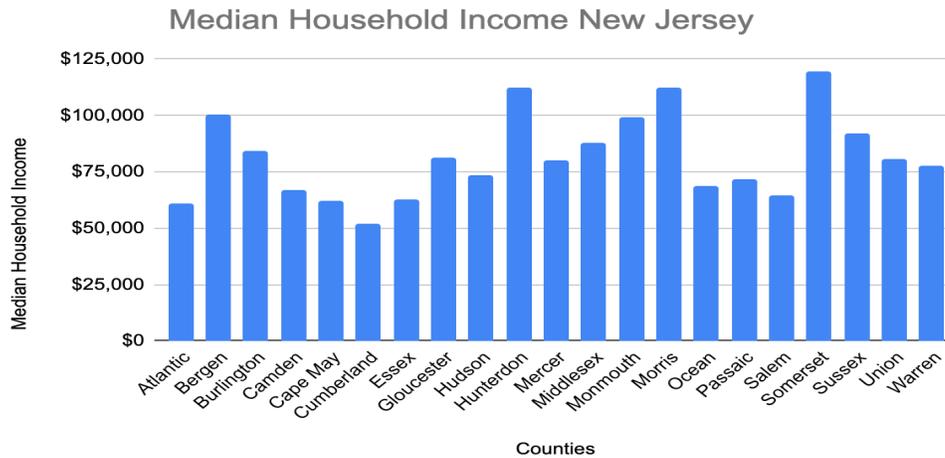
Use Medical Marijuana Act and Jake's law. Medical Marijuana has been legal since 2010 with nine dispensaries open because of limited licenses available in New Jersey. Patients who are enrolled in the program are allowed to possess/purchase 3 ounces equaling 85 grams in a 30 day period. In general there is still no specified amount of marijuana is legal to carry going into 2021. Until that amount is specified then someone who is in possession of 50 grams of cannabis or less is punishable to 6 months in jail and a fine of up to \$1,000. Will the amount of cannabis in possession that's punishable to 6 months in jail and a fine up to \$1,000 go down once a bill is passed? What is the plan for citizens who have been impacted by current laws? Will they be augmented with new policy decisions about expungement?

Even though post legalization has been passed on the ballot there still needs to be a bill passed. However, this brings up many questions. The first being, how long until state lawmakers pass a bill with details about the rules and regulations of cannabis? Or how about when more businesses come up, will there be a percentage of licenses that align with social justice and business equity for communities and individuals who are disenfranchised by the current and past cannabis regulations? Where would those taxes then be allocated? Towards expungement or education? More importantly, is there going to be change in the way that cannabis is talked about in the future, whether that be in an educational setting or in general?

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recently New Jersey has become one of few states that have legalized recreational use of cannabis. Though cannabis is legal in New Jersey there is still an urgent matter that needs to be addressed and that is the history of criminal marginalizing of BIPOC individuals for the use of cannabis as well as the deliberate exclusion of BIPOC individuals in the cannabis industry. In order to rectify past actions that have been made towards the BIPOC community changes must

occur in New Jersey. New Jersey must be willing to include their own definition of social equity and the equity applicant within their state and address who has been excluded and in need of protection within the cannabis industry. For New Jersey, their definition of social equity should be acknowledging and rectifying injustice practices and treatments that are aimed towards preferential and discriminatory methods towards a certain demographic. Once these practices and treatments are addressed various tactics must be put in place to cease the inequitable status quo. For New Jersey, the equity applicant will be individuals that have been disproportionately impacted by the war on drugs, marijuana prohibition, high arrest rates and incarceration for offenses under the controlled substances act, and low socioeconomic factors. Applicants that fall under these categories are BIPOC individuals and women, veterans, median household income of \$70,000, incarcerated/returned citizens, and BIPOC cultivators and farmers. Along with citizens on parole and probation, and those that are disabled. In New Jersey, the practices of exclusion and need protection can be seen through including individuals that are currently incarcerated on charges for possession of marijuana. Along with individuals that are on probation for marijuana charges and those on parole. This part is due to the War on drugs along with past marijuana legislation that encourages mass incarceration. There is an exclusion in certain demographics owning dispensaries such as BIPOC women, veterans, and BIPOC individuals. There are also disproportionately impacted communities/zones that are affected through unemployment and low-income status which can be seen from county to county. For example, certain counties in New Jersey display a high unemployment rate. According to New Jersey counties unemployment rates for the month of October, counties such as Atlantic- 11.8%, Passaic- 10.4%, Essex- 10.3%, Hudson-9.1%, Cape May-8.7%, Union-8.3%, Cumberland- 8%, Camden- 7.9%, Salem-7.4% experiences high unemployment rates throughout New Jersey.



Along with certain counties in New Jersey falling under the income median household under \$70,000. According to the United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Services in places such as Ocean County-\$68,483, Camden-\$67,135, Salem- \$64,524, Essex- \$62,875, Cape May-\$62,175, Atlantic- \$60,826, and Cumberland-\$51,790 fall underneath this household income. Lastly racial disparities in marijuana arrest rates. According to a recent ACLU report, “in New Jersey, blacks are 3.5 more times likely to be arrested for cannabis than white people”. When looking by county by county-level certain counties have a high demographic in which African Americans make up more than half of the arrest rates.

As the Social Equity group at Rider University, we have generated a defining ground for equity applicants. Equity applicants can be defined as anyone who has been disproportionately impacted by the marijuana prohibition, arrest and incarceration or the war on drugs. Furthermore, one of our social equity recommendations involves the expungement of individuals. Expungement can be defined as the erasure or removal of those formerly incarcerated on marijuana charges. The following provides the official expungement records and protocols in regards to those who have been disproportionately impacted by the marijuana prohibition, arrest and incarceration or the war on drugs, as stated previously, in the state of Illinois as an example. Furthermore, we have collected the services that have been provided for those returned citizens

who have previously been expunged through incarceration. In the state of Illinois, the Automatic Expungement of Law Enforcement Records show that the local law enforcement agencies and the Illinois State Police have up to five years to review and automatically expunge police records for misdemeanor and Class 4 felony charges under 30 grams that did not lead to conviction. Category I, however, does not expunge court records. Therefore, the person is still required to file a petition to remove those records from the public's view. The Automatic Process for Governor Pardon & Expungement in the state of Illinois provides the following in regards to the expungement of the formerly incarcerated on marijuana charges ; (1) The Illinois State Police will identify all misdemeanor and Class 4 felony convictions for under 30 grams that do NOT have other arrests for violent offenses in the case or include a penalty enhancement, (2) The list is vetted by the Prisoner Review Board and presented to the Governor with a confidential, non-binding recommendation on whether to grant a pardon authorizing expungement, (3) If a pardon is granted, the Attorney General's Office is responsible for filing petitions to expunge in appropriate counties. In the state of Illinois, the Petition Process to Vacate & Expunge Through the Courts indicates that all misdemeanor and Class 4 felony convictions are eligible through filing a petition to vacate and expunge in the court of conviction, and Category 3 includes convictions that are disqualified from the automatic pardon process on the amount or associated charges. It has also been found that funding is provided for civil legal aid representation for qualifying individuals and allows the State's Attorney's Offices to also file these motions on behalf of individuals. As marijuana users are grouped with other former prison inmates, they are almost 10 times more likely to become homeless than the general population. In New York City, for example, more than 54% of people released from prison moved straight into the city's shelter system in 2017. This is a major issue amongst those formerly incarcerated for smaller charges

like possession of marijuana. We disagree with this handling, and feel that there needs to be more options put out for those who are released from a misdemeanor or smaller charge. This system implicitly, as well as explicitly affects people of the BIPOC community, due to the fact that they face disproportionately high rates of arrest and incarceration. Rental assistance, Airbnb, barring landlords from asking about felony convictions on rental applications, intensive counseling, vocational training and housing support are some of the many processes that are currently being put in place in particular states that can help decrease the number of homeless people who have been previously incarcerated. Relatedly, one of the greatest obstacles impeding marijuana equity in New Jersey is the lack of comprehensive financial support for those who need it most. Our intention through our state-wide equity plan begins with the creation of direct, community-based funding.

We also recommend that New Jersey make significant changes to their annual budget, instituting a three-pronged reform approach: 1) Refocusing tax investment, 2) Start-Up funding, and 3) Building grants into the state budget. To begin, the refocusing of tax investment will make sure that resources and financial support re-enter the communities that need them most. The state of Massachusetts has already established a precedent of reintegrating money taken from legalized marijuana revenue back into the most vulnerable communities—it's time that New Jersey does the same. In accordance with Massachusetts' [Section 14. Marijuana Regulation Fund](#), our social equity team also recommends that the money earned from legal marijuana transactions be recycled into one of three places: 1) **Public Health and Safety** (i.e. rehabilitation centers for recovering substance abusers, intervention and treatment services), 2) **Educational Funding** (i.e. substance education programs, early-intervention substance abuse programs, after-school educational programming to keep students in safe, drug-free environments), and 3)

Programs for Restorative Justice (i.e. jail diversion programs, community service initiatives, workforce placement and development). Secondly, Start-Up Funding is needed to exclusively support BIPOC individuals in their marijuana business journeys. We recommend that the state institute direct funds to help enfranchise previously-disenfranchised BIPOC small business owners, start-up businesses, and other marijuana business outgrowths. These funds are to be used **ONLY** for BIPOC individuals, in order to level the playing field of the booming business world of legalized marijuana sales. Please note: There are **NO** funds to be recycled back into state or local law enforcement agencies. We recommend that the state have a line item in their annual budget that goes not to law enforcement nor to the commission overseeing these changes, but as a direct fund for start-up capital for future equity-based businesses. The disproportionately racist and disenfranchising nature waged by the War on Drugs is not one that will be resolved by increased financial support for law enforcement; rather, the healing will begin by providing financial and structural support to the communities most wounded by previous drug legislation. Lastly, Building Grants into the State Budget will funnel grants into two equity-focused programs: **Grants for Licensing Programs** and **Grants for Training and Technological Assistance**. The **Grants for Licensing Programs** will create a space in which license-eligible applicants from the BIPOC community will be privy to licensing exclusivity clauses within the state's programming. The licensing exclusivity clause states that within the first 3 years of this report's passing, only BIPOC individuals who have completed our social equity program (i.e. qualify for licenses) will be eligible for state licensure to grow, sell, and purchase marijuana. Specifically, these exclusivity parameters will allow for previously-disenfranchised groups to receive the opportunity to establish themselves as business people in the field—a chance that many BIPOC individuals have not received until now. Under the new social equity program, the

Grants for Training and Technological Assistance training will be covered under New Jersey's "Cannabis Regulation Commission." Under the Cannabis Regulation Commission, training will focus on teaching the individuals in these positions the codified laws and latent consequences of disproportionate licensure. These training will educate those in power and urge them to create positive legislation and change to benefit those they serve.

Our group offers several suggestions that aim to transform the cannabis industry into an inclusive and diverse business that allows for equal access and opportunity. For clarity purposes, equity is the quality of being fair and impartial, oftentimes requiring differing treatment that guarantees everyone equal and fair opportunity. More specifically, the cannabis industry needs to acknowledge and encourage people who have been disproportionately affected by marijuana prohibition and enforcement and provide them with equal opportunity to participate in the industry. In terms of access, we need to be sure that everyone is getting a fair amount of cannabis dispensed. Racial bias in pain assessment and treatment must be addressed to ensure that everyone is being treated in accordance with medical guidelines and existing research. Eliminating racial bias in treatment and assessment will allow equal access for members of the BIPOC community who wish to participate in the industry. In addition, zoning and geographic location must be assessed in terms of access to allow the cannabis industry to blossom into an inclusive business. Urban planning and geographic limitations may prevent full participation, specifically of people who have been disproportionately affected by marijuana enforcement and those who have federal ties. For example, individuals using food stamps and federal housing may need specific access to participate as federally funded housing regulations may prevent recreational use. Special allotments for recreational and medical use may be necessary.

Additionally, the differing costs of medical marijuana cards must be addressed to allow for full participation, States vary greatly in registration fees for medical marijuana ID cards. States range from waived fees to approximately two hundred dollars or more for registration. This difference in price prevents people of lower socioeconomic status from participating and experiencing the benefits of cannabis. To create equal access, registration fees should be significantly lowered among states, striving to eventually waive fees completely. Economic as well as racial barriers have prevented equal access to cannabis and must be addressed to effect positive change.

Our overall goal is not only allowing for full participation, but to ensure meaningful access. In doing so, social equity programs must be implemented to provide underprivileged people and communities tools for success and growth within the industry. Without the implementation of social equity programs, equal and meaningful access will never be achieved. Implementing social equity programs is a vital step in the cannabis legalization process that will promote diversity and encourage black and brown contributions that have been historically overlooked.

The Social Equity Program (SEP) is a free, statewide, technical assistance, and training program that provides education, skill-based training, and tools for success in the cannabis industry. The SEP focuses on those most impacted by the War on Drugs, marijuana prohibition, disproportionate arrests and incarceration, and provides education and entry across four areas: entrepreneurship, entry- and managerial-level workforce development, and ancillary business support.

Benefits from the Social Equity Include for social equity applicants we will waive 100% of any nonrefundable license application fees, any refundable fees from purchasing a license to operate a cannabis establishment, and any surety bond or other financial requirements.

We also give Free training and technical assistance in the form of Program Tracks. These tracks are designed based on an applicant's specific interest in the cannabis industry, their current skills, and the outcomes they are seeking from the program.

The Entrepreneur Track is for participants seeking Marijuana Establishment licensure. The program will prepare participants to apply for, own, and sustain a Marijuana Establishment. Courses include but are not limited to:

- a. Application and Licensure Process;
- b. Business Plan Development and Raising Capital;
- c. Operational Compliance and Post-Licensure Operations; and
- d. The Municipal Process and Host Community Agreements.

The Core Track is for participants seeking managerial and executive-level careers within a Marijuana Establishment. The program will prepare participants to understand best management practices for cannabis businesses, identify opportunities for managerial positions, and provide hands-on training and education to obtain relevant positions. Courses include but are not limited to

- a. Cultivation and Product Manufacturing;
- b. Lab Testing and Cannabis-Specific Retail; and Resume and Interview Preparation for Cannabis Careers.

The Entry Track is for participants interested in entry-level careers within a Marijuana Establishment with little or no experience. The program prepares participants to understand the cannabis plant, legal industry, and entry-level opportunities. Courses include but are not limited to:

- a. Retail, Cultivation, and Product Manufacturing; Testing and Cannabis-Specific Education; and Resume and Interview Preparation for Entry-Level Positions in the Cannabis Industry.

The Ancillary Track is for participants who have skills or businesses that support the cannabis industry but are not seeking licensure or employment within a Marijuana Establishment. The program will prepare participants to understand how their current skill sets or businesses are related to and supportive of the cannabis industry. The coursework will also explore how to develop an ancillary business. Courses include but are not limited to:

- a. Business Plan Creation and Facility Design;
- b. Accounting, Taxes, and Business Compliance;
- c. Branding, Marketing, and Advertising

CONCLUSION

Rider University's Reefer Madness: From Panic to Profit course focused on a semester-long project that was created in a total of three groups: Public Health, Social Equity and Voter Education. With the help of the class's mentors, Dr. Marion McNabb, Marshall Ogen, and Shekia Scott, students were able to construct a survey, which was computed and discussed during our Final Virtual Event presentation on the legalization of recreational cannabis use within the

state of New Jersey. The survey that was conducted encompassed opinions of New Jersey residents aged 18+ on cannabis. A final report of the course findings will be sent to state legislators and advocates to establish a means of legality. As of January 1, 2020, recreational cannabis use will be legalized within the state of New Jersey. Overall, it will be interesting to see how the legalization of recreational use of cannabis impacts social equity, public health and voter education based on the results we acquired throughout the course.

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