



Cherron Perry-Thomas, (Sher-Run)

Founder of Black Cannabis Week, and the founder of the Diaspora Alliance for Cannabis Opportunities (DACO) is based in Philadelphia, PA.

I have been a business owner with a marketing and sales agency for over 20 years in the natural product industry where I first learned of the regulated economic opportunities in the cannabis sector. After a business trip to Vancouver, I saw firsthand cannabis businesses and independent owners working to build a new economy in their country. Most people in our state could never imagine having a chance of entering or owning a cannabis business without the threat of criminalization or harm.

Today, I sit before you not just as an advocate for wellness, but as a voice for justice, economic and social equity. As we stand on the cusp of establishing a new adult-use cannabis program, we are presented with an unprecedented opportunity to right the wrongs of the past and pave the way for a future that honors the principles of equity and inclusion in Pennsylvania.

For far too long, the war on drugs has disproportionately impacted our most vulnerable communities, leaving a legacy of injustice, underserved families, and missed opportunities. As we move forward, we must ensure that a cannabis program does

This action alone has the power to transform lives, removing barriers to employment, housing, and education that have unjustly held back too many for too long.

We encourage businesses as cooperatives, where members collectively own and democratically control the enterprise. Structuring businesses as cooperatives ensures collective ownership and democratic control, particularly benefiting disadvantaged farmers and communities by providing them with a tangible stake in their success. This model emphasizes the equitable distribution of profits, shared resources, and access to markets, significantly lowering barriers to entry and promoting sustainability.

Support for disadvantaged farmers and communities is recommended. By providing financial and technical assistance, as well as access to necessary resources, we aim to enable meaningful participation in the legal cannabis market. Facilitating market access and ensuring compliance support are essential steps towards an inclusive and fair cannabis industry.

Moreover, the establishment of an independent regulatory program, including a Cannabis Regulatory Control Board and a Social Equity Office of Business Support & Training is critical for overseeing the market's sustainability and fairness. These entities will play vital roles in conducting market analysis, overseeing mergers and acquisitions, offering business development programs, and facilitating the license application process, ensuring a balanced and equitable market.

In conclusion, these recommendations are designed not just to rectify past wrongs but also to lay a strong foundation for a future where the cannabis industry is as diverse and inclusive as the communities it serves. By focusing on social equity, cooperative