



NAACP

Alaska Oregon Washington State Area Conference

September 13, 2021

Dear Governor Jay Inslee, WA State Legislature and applicable State agencies and entities:

It has been 9 years since the voters passed Initiative 502, legalizing cannabis in WA. State. Since then, the War on Drug policies has shifted from locking up our community to locking us out of the industry's economic opportunities.

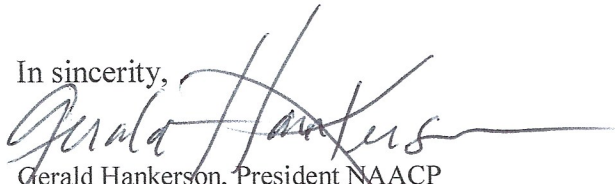
For nearly 70 years, African-Americans were targeted, arrested and convicted at alarming rates, and labeled criminals for selling dime bags on street corners in WA State. Today, on that same street corner, privileged entrepreneurs are allowed to legally sell pounds for profit as long as the State get its cut, while further suppressing the very communities previously targeted by War on Drug policies that led to mass incarceration. Currently there are 560 retail licenses allotted in WA state, but less than 5 is awarded to African-American. In 2020, Washington State Cannabis Industry generated \$8 billion in revenue, earning \$2 billion for WA State general fund.

In 2020, Washington State enacted E2SHB 2870, allowing the issuance of marijuana retail licenses under a social equity program. In its policy, not one mention of racial equity nor its intent to make equal the disproportionate impact its drug policies have on African-Americans. Instead, it assembles State agencies to help facilitate gate-keeping policies designed to benefit the industry, not the people.

As the nation's oldest Civil Rights organization, the NAACP is well-versed on racial inequity, and its impact on communities, as well as economic oppression driven by institutions & industries that benefit & profit off the backs of our people. In 2011, African –Americans made up 4.4% of state population, but 18% prison population. Now that cannabis is legal in Washington State, for the State to enact strategic policies that further restricts our community from equal economic opportunities is egregious and underscores the systemic racial inequities that continue to exist in many of our state-wide economic policies.

Therefore, we're calling on Governor Inslee, the State Legislature and all state agencies to develop and implement anti-racist policies to allow equal economic opportunities for African-Americans and communities of color. Meanwhile, the NAACP will remain diligent and disrupt all state-wide efforts that continue to disenfranchise our community from the economic benefits of the cannabis industry. We can no longer wait, nor anticipate true equity from restrictive cannabis policies built on institutional racism and white supremacy laws. We are done begging for what we have earned, and deserve!

In sincerity,



Gerald Hankerson, President NAACP
Washington, Oregon & Alaska
<http://www.naacpaowsac.org>