

Hello,

My name is Edgar Castaneda , I am a hopeful pre applicant for E2SHB 2870 alongside my sister, Jasmine Castaneda. We are Latinxs, both of whom were born and raised in the state of Washington. We thank the LCB for this opportunity and the justice being done to allow communities of color to be able to flourish in this market. I, Edgar, have not only worked in the industry but have seen and experienced the injustice all across the board from racism to sexism. Knowing we have a chance to finally change this environment sparks massive joy in our hearts. However, we still have major concerns after attending the last LCB and Task Force virtual sessions and have been left with more questions than answers.

Our understanding of this program was that it would provide opportunities for all persons of color but the way the message was conveyed that African American applicants would be prioritized led us and other potential Latinx applicants to feel discluded. Hispanics are the pioneers of modern day cannabis cultivation. The methods used to grow in Mexico has led to the production of higher quality plants. In fact, the phenos used in most of today's genetics come from the very same method. Hispanics, specifically Mexicans , were the true main reason why cannabis was even made illegal by the , Federal Bureau of Narcotics. In 1930, Harry Anslinger, used nazi propoganda against Mexico and it's people to demonize cannabis and lied about our habits and how smoking cannabis made Mexicans evil against white america. These lies were spread by changing the name cannabis to marijuana which happens to be racist towards Mexico and it's people. All this so Anslinger's, agency wouldn't lose funding or be shut down. The "War on Drugs", which was aimed at African Americans, didn't start until President Richard Nixon held office almost 40 years later.

Historically speaking, cannabis was criminalized to target Mexicans with racial bias first but as it has always been, our people are still dismissed and forgotten. Like the Mexican-American War never happened and all the land that makes up Texas wasn't stolen from our people through bloodshed. Being descendants of Mexican immigrants, we know what it's like and see still to this day the racism and discrimination towards my people and it saddens me to know that our communities as a whole don't get any recognition or help for our inherited struggles. We feel that by prioritizing applicants who are African American, you are ignoring history and making the playing field even more uneven. As minorities we have ALL been affected by racial bias and violence. We have ALL either been stolen from our land or had our land stolen. President Trump called Mexico's people "rapists and drug dealers" and our children are locked in cages, starved, beaten, and "lost". So many of our children are taken from their families and many are sold into human trafficking. So not only do we feel our history is being ignored, but the cries of anguish from our people still ringing unheard to this day.

We ask that you greatly consider keeping this opportunity open to ALL minority communities as we have ALL faced violence and discrimination from white America. All we ask for is a fair chance for all applicants considered so ALL communities of color can be represented and taken into account. Living in south King County for 20+ years, specifically in a neighborhood right in front of section 8 housing, we have felt the negligence and have been excluded from various social projects and opportunities. No longer will we sit quiet and watch our communities be affected not only by the phony War on Drugs, but as well exclusion and negligence towards Latinx people.

Thank you all for coming together in this time of need and being our voices so as a WHOLE we can all be heard. We would be nowhere close to this progression if it wasn't for advocates like all of you and we highly appreciate the work being done so this program can be successful. Hopefully the conversation doesn't end here and looking forward to the next workgroups on this matter. Have a great day and hope this makes it to all of the task force members.

Sincerely,
Edgar & Jasmine Castaneda