

Good afternoon my name is Mike Asai with Emerald City Collective Gardens.

I want to first thank LCB, Task Force and others who have giving us this opportunity to speak our truth and tell our story.

Emerald City Collective Gardens was established on October 8th, 2010.

Licensed as a non-profit with the Secretary of State, Washington State, and the City of Seattle.

Emerald City Collective Gardens was the 2nd African American owned Collective in WA State after the GAME Collective. ECCG was the first Medical Cannabis Collective in Downtown Seattle.

Living in California during the 2008 Recession I became homeless. During this time my Fathers health started to decline. I moved back in late 2008 to be closer to him. He past away unexpectedly on July 27th, 2009. My Father was my best friend. I miss my Dad.

ECCG started because my Dad and others like him needed Cannabis. They needed a safe place to access medical Cannabis. I knew I could provide such a model. This was not about money in the beginning, but about helping patients like my Father access Cannabis in a safe environment. There were a handful of Medical Cannabis Collectives in King County 2009-2010. Most of them looked shady with no handicap access. I discovered all of them during this time were not African American owned until I came across GAME Collective in West Seattle. Once I visited GAME Collective I knew this could be done. GAME Collective was the model for safe access to Cannabis we now see today with Cannabis Retail. I felt more empowered to make the dream come true.

Coming from a family background of public servants since the late 1800's. I felt it was my duty to help the community of Cannabis Patients have safe and clean access.

As stated before ECCG was fully licensed as a Nonprofit Cannabis business. We paid all state and local taxes from 2010-2016. Though our business was in a grey area in the beginning we figured at some point paying taxes now would help us in the future.

On a daily we helped veterans, the homeless, heroin addicts, low income patients. We gave a lot of Cannabis away for compassion and with our punch card program.

When Cannabis became legal in 2012 we knew the path to becoming fully legal out of the grey area was around the corner. 3 major personal issues at the same time when the lottery for Retail become active November 30th, 2013, I was unable to apply.

Oct 12th, 2015 we as Cannabis Collectives thought now was our chance to become a Retail and Medical Cannabis Business. We were wrong!

I have in hand from the LCB website in 2015 information about the application process for Retail. No where on the LCB website was any information pertaining to max allotments for Retail Licenses in each city or county.

On page 1 of form 5659 at the very top it read [Important Notice]

Per Cannabis Patient Protection Act (CPPA) the Board is now accepting and processing new retail applications using the priority criteria set forth in the law. THERE WILL NOT BE AN INITIAL CAP ON THE NUMBER OF LICENSES ISSUED. Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to ensure that they have all of the required documentation before applying. Failure

to provide required documentation in a timely manner will result in the application being withdrawn.

On form 5916 there was 11 application guidelines how to apply for a retail.

Page 1 number 1 it read in bold letters. THERE IS NO RUSH TO APPLY. PLEASE DO NOT DO SO UNTIL YOU HAVE THE REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION TO VERIFY YOUR PRIORITY CATEGORY.

This was completely misleading to all. Seems this was done on purpose to throw off Collectives not to apply right away. We at ECCG just knew for sure we would be able to get a license to become a Cannabis Retail.

My question to the Mr. Garza is who approved for this to be posted on the LCB website?

I applied for 2 retail locations for Jan 28, 2016. March 2016 I received a email from Beth Lehman asking to provide documentation to move forward with the process. Once this was done I was told we would be a Priority 2 because nobody from the Collective applied or had a retail license from 2013.

At the same time this was going on Department of Revenue was placing Tax Warrants on the Collective for unpaid taxes from a few months prior. We may have been late but we always paid taxes in full since 2010. Unknown to us Collective Gardens had become exempt from paying taxes July 1st, 2015 till June 30th, 2016. There was a special notice on the website but nothing was sent in mail to us. DOR knew this. All the tax agents knew this but continued to bully Collectives into paying taxes they knew were tax exempt.

April 8th, 2016 Beth Lehman explained in email LCB is issuing refunds for all Priority 2's and 3's. There was absolutely no time table or deadline to receive a refund. We appreciated the offer at the time but still wanted to move forward with the process.

With no current updates for several months I drove to LCB Headquarters to speak with the Board in person. I was 5 mins late and the Board meeting was over. I asked to speak with Beth Lehman in hopes of being able to move forward in the process. She came into the lobby and never offered to speak with me in a private manner. Instead I had to pull out all my paper work in the lobby in front of other people walking around. I felt disrespected. She & LCB was not taking ECCG and me serious. I ask to speak with someone in charge above her. She said Frank O'dell would come out to speak with me in person.

He came out 15 minutes later. I asked if we could speak in a private manner. He offered to speak in the board room. He was very respectful and understood my frustration with the process. I pleaded my story to Mr O'dell. He explained to me his hands were tied because of the language in the law. I drove back to Seattle deflated and discouraged.

April 18th, 2017 we received a email from Dan Simore notifying the LCB was withdrawing all priority 2 and 3 applications for Cannabis retail licenses they received between Oct 12th, 2015 to March 31st, 2016. At this point I was not surprised by this decision from the LCB. What did surprise me was the LCB was not issuing refunds for withdrawn applications. A year earlier Beth Lehman had stated otherwise. To this date I have not receive a refund. I have gotten the run around from Frank O'dell and Beth Lehman.

Now after emailing Beth Lehman and Rebecca Smith this past Thursday all of a sudden my request to receive a refund will be granted. My last email with Beth Lehman in 2018 she

completely dismiss my request for a refund. LCB needs to refund all priority 2 and 3 applicants as they stated they would.

My question to Rebecca Smith is why would there be a opportunity to receive a refund and then not honor it? Where you aware of any of this? The money is not the issue its the principle. I'm more concerned about ECCG getting a Retail Cannabis License. We as Collective Gardens who paid taxes and had business license should have been Grandfather in when it came to getting a Retail Cannabis License.

LCB along with the Social Equity Task Force now has the power to make the wrong done to former Collectives right. LCB should grant those former Collectives a retail license without having to go through more red tape. But if this is what it takes to qualify then so be it. My personal family & friends have been convicted for Cannabis too many times to keep track off. We all know the injustice done to African Americans the past 400 plus years.

Covid-19 has been a struggle for all across the nation. A lot of our families have been affected becoming unemployed or cut hours. Cannabis is essential. Had we as former Collective owners had our opportunity to have a Cannabis Retail Business, we would be able to help our family and friends right now during this crisis. We are not able to. This has been mentally tough to deal with. Seeing all the retail locations open making money while we and our families struggle is a slap in the face to us pioneers who got ex out.

LCB and task force needs to do the right thing and license those Collectives who should have been Grandfathered in, in 2015. LCB has the power to expand allotments in cities where former Collectives use to be. The LCB has the full power now to make the correct decision. No more hiding behind a priority scale law. African Americans deserve the right to make generational wealth for our families.

Emerald City Collective Gardens is qualified and I am qualified. My application and location is ready today!!

Thank you!

December 22, 2021

Washington State Board of Health  
PO Box 47990  
Olympia, WA 98504-7990

Reference: Technical Assistance Grants

Dear Social Equity in Cannabis Task Force Members,

We are a collection of licensed I-502 black-owned businesses ranging from retailers to producers. Collectively, we have over 60 years of experience and knowledge in the cannabis industry. To date, we represent over 40 million dollars in excise taxes paid to the state of Washington. We employ staff, lease buildings, and contribute to the local economy just like every other I-502 business.

Although several entrepreneurs' sales in the marijuana industry have done well through the current pandemic environment, small businesses, qualifying as social equity business owners, maybe the exception. The global pandemic has created challenges for our businesses we could not have foreseen. In a noticeably short amount of time, we have had to introduce, address, and implement modifications to many of our operational processes, on an already tight profit margin which has also depleted company reserves. Some of these tasks include..

- Inconsistent procurement of goods and services due to affected logistics
- Infrastructure enhancements such as camera security clarity to allow the police force to quickly react to increased violations
- Additional human resource activity in the form of staff training due to increased hiring based on staff shortages; Increased duties such as hazard pay for our "essential workers" as they perform curbside delivery and other new tasks
- CDC protocol implementation guidelines through tenant improvements to safeguard all staff and customers, in the form of body temperature check equipment, masks, and gloves to use daily to increase the accuracy of detecting ill individuals
- Community relief in the form of school supplies and food, as those responsibilities now lay more heavily on parents, as business owners and "good" neighbors, we are compelled to support our community.

These modifications have increased the cost of our daily operation. Listening to the dialogue at the previous task force meeting on December 14, 2020, we were disheartened that the financial effect on social equity-qualified small businesses were not addressed.

The induced costs of this pandemic are making it extremely hard to survive. Therefore, we are now reaching out to communicate the urgent need for the social equity task force to act. We feel the \$1.2 Million in technical assistance funding that is earmarked for HB 2870 can help assist I-502 Washington small businesses. Below is a suggestion on how to split the grant into four categories so businesses may effectively access what applies to them. This will also clarify how the requested assistance aligns with the mission of the task force to help support their business.

#### **Technical Assistance to Current I-502 industry owners and Incubator Projects**

- Infrastructure (\$50,000)
- Technology Upgrade (\$30,000)
- Supplies (\$30,000)
- Incubator and mentor program (\$30,000)

If you are in the industry, you should be able to apply for one or more of the above four suggested categories of the grant to help alleviate some of the stress Covid-19 has put on your small business. Each request should demonstrate completion of the project within 12 months of receiving the grant. Currently, there are Black and other BIPOC business owners within the industry who could use those funds to help sustain their business through this devastating climate.

We are not asking for a handout, but similar relief received by other small businesses during this pandemic.

The passage of HB 2870 was the catalyst to create more businesses like ours. The first success of the task force can be the issuance of this grant money to help save those already operating in this space.

Thank you for your time and continued work in this space. We appreciate you.

Sincerely,

**Duwane Dunn**, Emerald Leaves

**Dennis Turner**, Alkaloid Inc, Lucid North Cannabis and Green Solution Place, Lucid Cheney

**Emmanuel Frayer**, Natural Mystics LLC dba Lucid Lacey & Lucid Olympia

**Stan Johnson**, Green Solution Place Preludio Management dba Lucid Auburn and Timberline development dba Lucid Puyallup

**Paul Brice**, Happy Trees

**Raft Hollingsworth**, Hollingsworth Cannabis Company

**Joy Hollingsworth**, Hollingsworth Cannabis Company

**Tamera Berkley**, Natural Blessings

**Darlene & Dr. Julius Debro**, JD Associates Tacoma

**Aaron Bossett**, Black Cannabis Commission

**From:** [Hoff, Christy Curwick \(SBOH\)](#)  
**To:** [Rasmussen, Elise \(DOH\)](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Traceability issue---no where else to turn License # WA I 502 429939  
**Date:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 2:31:34 PM

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**From:** Darlene Conley <darlenejconley@msn.com>  
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**Cc:** Duval, Dora M. (LCB) <dora.duval@lcb.wa.gov>; Hoffman, Katherine (LCB) <katherine.hoffman@lcb.wa.gov>  
**Subject:** Traceability issue---no where else to turn License # WA I 502 429939

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To: The WA State LCB Board Members  
and the Social Equity Task Force Members

We have been struggling with getting a sample to a retail vendor that uses Bio Track for since December 31, 2020. The problem stems from the fact that LEAF support will not provide sufficient technical assistance to help retrieve information if a 3<sup>rd</sup> party vendor is involved. We have managed to get samples through to other stores using the Green Bits system, but cannot get the sample to the store using Bio Track. We are in danger of losing a very big sale because the store was going to feature our product for the MLK, Jr. holiday and Black History Month in February.

***There must be someone at the LCB who could help us get this sample through, since the LCB contracts with MJ Freeway and LEAF and monitors 3<sup>rd</sup> Party vendors such as Bio Track.*** We have contacted LEAF Support and Bio Track multiple times. Dora Duvall, from the Marijuana Examiners office was able to get me a support session with LEAF support since it is difficult to get LEAF support to work with us if a “3<sup>rd</sup> party vendor” is involved. After 2 sessions they have assured me that the sample is in the system correctly. LEAF claims that the problem is with Bio Track and Bio Track claims that it is a Leaf issue. Evidently it is a problem with Bio Track and the vendor has to go into the

system and manually extract the data out of LEAF. A Bio Track representative told me today, that they cannot sign into LEAF. What we are required to do know is to somehow try to set up a conference call between the store representative, myself and a Bio Track representative to complete the task. The problem is that it can take hours of repeated calls to reach a representative at Bio Track. We have submitted written requests but it takes 3 to 4 days to get a response. Also, we learned today from a Bio Track technician that they discussed our case in a meeting and concluded that it was not their responsibility because they see it as a LEAF issue.

The problem can be traced to the fact that we use the State LEAF traceability system which is subsidized by marijuana licensees' yearly tax fees. However most producers and processors pay a 3<sup>rd</sup> party vendor to handle their traceability and these companies charge a few thousand dollars a year. *As a small family owned business that is just getting started again, we cannot afford to hire an outside company to handle our traceability, nor should we have to because our license fees are used to subsidize the State traceability system.* When we started our first business, the State had a contract with Bio Track and also offered a so called free version. Although it was very difficult to learn to use and manage, it was 10,000 times better than the current traceability system. In 2018, when the LEAF traceability was first implemented, they had to create a workaround to create transfer manifests which many retail operations would not accept. We lost many potential sales in 2018 because of this problem and we are about to lose an important sale now. We are at a tremendous disadvantage, because unless a store is extremely motivated to work with us, they will not want to have to take all the extra effort to retrieve our information from the State system. I am sure that we are not the only business that has struggled with this issue.

We do want to say that I am very grateful that the MJ Examiner's office and Kathrine Hoffman for reaching out to them on our behalf. Also LEAF Support was very helpful after their intervention.

Coincidentally, we are a Black producer/processor business trying to sell to a Black owned retail outlet. It should not be this hard! *Please let me know if someone can help with this issue. We do not know where else to turn.*

*Darlene J. Conley and Julius Debro, Greenjoyherbs WA | 502 429939*

**Storytelling** is the art of captivating your audience by telling a compelling history. In this history.... you all have the power to write the next chapter.

I can go off in a tangent when it comes to something that I am passionate about so it would do me some service if I was to stick to answering 3 questions:

1. How did Cannabis legality affect me and my family's life?
2. Why am I interested in getting a retailer license?
3. What would I do to add a component to give back to the community?

### **1.-How did Cannabis legality affect my and my family's life?**

My son was left without a father when he was 5 until he turn 12, he's father was charged and convicted with attempted of drug distribution among other charges, now I would be lying if I said that the father of my son and I would have lived happily ever after if it wasn't for that, we were not together when he was convicted, but there is something about co-parenting for a single mom, when you are able to take one day and not worry about cooking and cleaning and watching after a child that can be liberating in a sense. When he was incarcerated my son would cry himself to sleep sometimes, he went through the grieving stages which was much more difficult for me to see than he would ever remember. Thank God I had my older brother, he became my son's role model and things got back to "normal" whatever "normal" is when you are missing a parent. Now that it has been a little over 3 years since he was released, and we are living together, my son his father and my daughter, looking at the ever changing dynamics of their relationship (my son and his father) and how they both in their own way have try to build of whatever is left of it has been interesting to say the least, my son still feels as if my brother is more of a father than his own father to the extent that he has his dad on his phone listed as "father figure"

### **2.- Why am I interested in this program?**

Well let's not skip the elephant in the room, right? I won't deny that I could provide some financial stability for my family and be able to help myself and family while I can give back in a very intentional way to the community. But my WHY? came to me so much clearer, last week.... I was laid off from work and I walked into my son's room and it smelled so much like MJ. and it was not the first time that it had happened, so I asked and of course he denied it, but something in my heart told me to look... I turned my son's room upside down and I found a vape with cannabis oil, of course he got more grounded than he has ever been in his entire short life, I was raised by a single Latina mother who is up until today a loving mother with a very strong temper. And I inherit both of those attributes. But what I have learn with time is that I turn to anger no matter what my feeling is, and if I don't try to seat and analyze what's the real



feeling behind it, it does not go away for a while, so I sat and try to understand why I was so mad. So, I could acknowledge it and then I can address the real issue. I came to the realization that my real feeling was scared; I am scared that my son would go down a path that could affect the rest of his life. I love him so much I do not want him to become another statistic

Once I heard that the level of the addiction should be measured with the quality of life of each individual, we all here have a basic understanding of what consequences can drugs have in our lives especially at an early age, Cannabis has been used historically as medicine and has been proven to have some positive results, however when it come to other drugs especially when we talk about drugs like opiates or meth and heroin the effect on people is different , But what about our youth? Do they know the consequences of them all? to me is like giving scissors to a 5-year-old and not teaching them how to use them.

## 1. What would I do to add a component to give back to the community?

What would we do? Sometime ago I had the honor to work for a non-profit organization who provided mentorship to our youth, the result on outcomes from high school droop out rate to peer pressure, so my brother and I pledge to give back 10% of the net profit after we take out the expenses to go towards a non-profit whose mission is either mentoring or teaching our youth about the risk of drugs and how the different types of drugs can affect them different in their lives, how the same drug can affect each of them different and the risk they are taking by opting to try them. with that said as for my opening statement the next chapter of this history would be written by you all.

Respectfully,

Veronica and Omar Abraham