



February 3, 2020

Chair, Representative John Lively  
House Committee on Economic Development  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**RE: HB4088**

Chair Lively and Members of the Committee:

I lead a nonprofit called [NuLeaf Project](#), which provides grants, coaching, and education to cannabis businesses owned by people of color. NuLeaf Project (NLP) also prepares professionals of color to obtain high-wage jobs in the cannabis industry. NLP places a priority on serving the communities most harmed by cannabis criminalization.

NLP is in very strong support of a statewide cannabis social equity bill. This is long overdue. Oregon is one of the very few states that does not have a cannabis social equity program. Today, states legalizing cannabis are doing so with a social equity program right at the start. States like [IL](#) are setting the standard for economic development in underdeveloped communities through their cannabis social equity program. In fact, voter support on social equity is so high that today states cannot legalize or advance legalization without social equity (see [NY](#) and [MD](#)).

HB4088 is an important start to Oregon's statewide cannabis social equity program. NuLeaf Project requests two changes before giving full support. Those are:

- 1) The bill should identify people of color as its priority population to receive funds, services and licensing discounts. This is crucial to ensure the tax revenue benefits the groups in Oregon that were targeted and most economically harmed by cannabis criminalization, which are African Americans, Native Americans and Latino Americans. NLP has found that economic investment into cannabis businesses owned by people of color has a strong return in increased revenue and profitability.
- 2) The bill needs to extend support beyond the cannabis industry. The negative economic effects of arrest and incarceration has a multi-generational impact on household wealth for entire families, and due to targeting of certain populations, harms entire communities. Thus, as social equity, the bill must specify investment into repairing economic inequities for African Americans, Native Americans, and Latino Americans more broadly. For example, funding programs that would increase household wealth or earning potential like professional development and job skills training, reentry programs, housing and homeownership assistance, and youth development.



NuLeaf Project supports a cannabis social equity bill. We'd like to see HB4088, with amendments, be the historic start of social equity in Oregon.

Jeannette Ward Horton  
Executive Director, NuLeaf Project