

Karmen Carol Pacheco
Salem, Oregon
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Support of HB 3112

I fully support HB 3112, also known as the Cannabis Social Equity bill. I am currently a law student at Willamette University College of Law and in my second year, with my undergraduate degree being in Criminal Justice and Criminology. Of those 4 years I spent studying, a large portion of my research projects and papers were studying the war on drugs and how it has disproportionately affected people of color, specifically African Americans, the Latinx populations, and indigenous peoples.

I strongly support the legalization of cannabis, although I admit we made a grave mistake not including a social equity bill with the legalization of cannabis. Men and woman of color have been arrested for the possession of cannabis for decades, destroying their ties to their communities, breaking apart families, and preventing any generational growth due to their criminal records for possessing a plant that was incorrectly deemed incredibly harmful to society.

We are at a point where we, as Oregonians, need to lift the people of color we have oppressed from the war on drugs and give them the opportunity to have businesses in a market they were once prosecuted for. With cannabis being federally illegal, banks will either refuse to loan money to people wishing to start cannabis companies or provide incredibly high interest rates, which many would not even qualify for the loan. Most cannabis companies are started not from loans from banking institutions, but from those with personal wealth or who know others with a large amount of wealth who are capable of investing. Allowing people of color a grant, funded from a percentage of the cannabis tax, to start their own cannabis business gives Oregon the opportunity to start mitigating the effects we have put on communities from incarcerating people and destroying their generational wealth.

And I will be frank--I'll never know what it is like to be affected by the war on drugs, perhaps most of you on the committee panel don't know either or would never know. I'm a white Latina woman who came from a lower middle-class family. My father was never incarcerated for possessing or selling cannabis. He was able to work his whole life and create a savings, help me in financially straining situations, be there for holidays, and be a part of a family. We won't be able to give back time lost to people incarcerated for possession of cannabis, but we can give them and their families the ability to generate wealth that they would otherwise not have access to—through the business they were originally prosecuted for.

Thank you for taking my testimony into consideration and, additionally, I fully support the legislative report and hope the numbers and statistics in the report sway you in the right direction.

S\ Karmen Carol Pacheco