

Submitter: Jonathan Ross
On Behalf Of: Wyld
Committee: House Committee On Economic Development and Small Business
Measure: HB3431

Dear Chair Bynum and the Honorable Members of the House Committee On Economic Development and Small Business,

My name is Jonathan Ross, and I am writing to ask for your support of the Oregon Economic Equity Investment Act, or HB 3431. I am deeply invested in the future of our state and in making systemic change that addresses economic justice, and speak on behalf myself and as a representative from the Corporate Social Responsibility Department of Wyld, a leading cannabis company headquartered in Clackamas.

As someone who was born and raised in Oregon, a small business owner, and community member, economic justice and equity are of paramount importance to me. While, through HB 1579(2021), the State committed to a one-time "Investment", we need to recognize that these funds are finite and that we still have a long way to go in supporting the creation of generational wealth and economic justice in the most impacted communities. Ongoing support for these communities through a reallocation of cannabis tax revenues gives our state an opportunity to be a leader in modeling change and partnership toward a common goal.

It is essential to recognize that Black Oregonians were arrested at four times the rate of their white counterparts for cannabis possession, despite usage being equal across races. This created a myriad of barriers that we need to continue to correct. The criminal justice system stripped wealth from Black families with documented targeting of Black communities through draconian laws supporting the War on Drugs, and communities are still recovering from the after-effects today. HB 3431 asks the legislature to make ongoing, holistic investments inof cannabis tax revenues to achieve positive change in the intersecting inequities of poverty and substance abuse.

The impact of these arrests goes beyond the immediate consequences of a criminal

record or incarceration. Impacted individuals and communities face a range of barriers that are a direct result of these arrests. For example, a criminal record can limit job opportunities, housing options, and access to educational and financial resources. These barriers can persist long after an individual has served their time, making it difficult for them to achieve economic stability and mobility.

My family has been historically impacted by cannabis throughout our lives while living in Oregon, in and out of the prison system, and still suffers from a barrage of lingering challenges. Achieving generational wealth seems impossible or, more appropriately, improbable due to the prioritization of time, money, and effort needed simply to survive. A one-time investment does not solve the complexity of this state's history, but a commitment to ongoing funding will create that opportunity. I ask only that you fund a vaccine, not a band-aid.

Oregon is a beautiful state because we have made such efforts to plant the seeds for progress; now we must ensure the appropriate conditions and opportunities for growth. Supporting HB 3431 is how we move forward, as a vital part not only in enhancing the economic strength of Oregon but also in addressing economic justice. We can only achieve this as a community through a continuous commitment.

I respectfully ask for your support of HB 3431 and thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Ross

Wyld CSR Diversity Equity Inclusion, Community Affairs

