



July 18, 2021

Dear Governor Cuomo and New York Lawmakers:

We are a dedicated group of New York cannabis law reform and advocacy organizations, trade associations, businesses, farmers, aspiring entrepreneurs, concerned individuals, and people negatively impacted by the racially disparate application of cannabis laws and policies. We have come together to call upon every elected official in New York with control over implementation of legislation, from the Governor to the Senate and the Assembly, to reconvene and appoint appropriate leadership to the Cannabis Control Board and Office of Cannabis without further delay.

Governor Cuomo heralded the victory of NY's new Cannabis Law, the Marihuana Regulation and Taxation Act, signed into law on 31 March 2021 stating: "This was one of my top priorities in this year's State of the State agenda and I'm proud these comprehensive reforms address and balance the social equity, safety, and economic impacts of legal adult-use cannabis. I thank both the Leader and the Speaker, and the tireless advocacy of so many for helping make today's historic day possible." Truly, New York's cannabis law holds the promise to uplift our state. In order for the new law to meet its vast potential and become the national model of creating an industry that puts communities, people, health, and environment above profits, we must have leadership in place that reflects these principles.

Yet, despite Cuomo claiming this as a priority, legalization has already stalled. If this new law was a collaborative victory between the Administration and the Legislators, why is there such disagreement about who should be implementing these consensus based goals? It is time to stop talking about diversity, equity, and inclusivity and start taking bold action to manifest these principles. The will of the people should be reflected in the implementation of the new law. Appointees should represent the geographic and cultural diversity of our state, and represent the commitments codified in the law to social equity, economic inclusivity, small businesses, and redress for communities most harmed by prohibition drug policies.

Now is the time to bring the \$350 million annual projected tax revenue and the 30,000 to 60,000 new jobs across the State to fruition. Failure to move forward with acceptable appointees undermines this victory and only encourages municipalities to opt out; discourages the conversion of legacy markets, allows out-of-state, unregulated, and often pesticide-laden cannabis to be sold in NY communities; delays redress to communities most harmed by the war on drugs; allows unregulated indoor grow to continue at a detriment to the environment; and compromises opportunities for aspiring farmers and small business owners.

Not until these key positions are appropriately created can we make progress towards a cannabis community that uplifts and prioritizes New Yorkers, our climate, our environment, our economy, and our health. We need political leadership to start from the premise that the needs of protecting NY farmers; developing small business opportunities; creating a level playing field for equity applicants; and providing New Yorkers a pathway to enter the market is more important than political gain.

It is now legal to consume cannabis in New York but still illegal for anyone except licensed medical cannabis companies to grow or sell it. Continuing to delay implementation will further disadvantage equity applicants and cause the industry to scramble to begin operations, and plant fields in time for next year's growing season. This can be avoided. Reconvene now for a special session and uphold your stated commitments to NY voters. We call upon Governor Cuomo to work expeditiously with NY State Legislators to appoint a Cannabis Control Board and Office of Cannabis Management leadership that reflects the people of this state. Uphold your promise and uplift New York.

Sincerely,

- BudsFeed LLC
- Cannabis Education Advocacy Symposium & Expo (CEASE)
- Cannaclusive
- CannaCultural
- Cannasigliere, LLC
- Cannaware Society
- Community Board 9
- Chickweed farms
- Conscious Communications
- Empire State NORML
- Ganja War Veterans for Equity
- GHHS, LLC / Uplifting Health & Wellness
- Grass is Greener PR
- Harlem Farms

- Hemp Lab NYC
- Hempire State Growers
- Jason Green Consulting
- Legal Market Strategies
- Little Beach Harvest of Shinnecock Nation
- Mannada, LLC
- NY Small Farma
- NYC NORML
- NYU CannaPolicy
- Protest NYC
- Return to Rise, Heart Foundation
- The Mary Jane Consulting Group
- The Cannabis Community
- Toke Chiba LLC
- Western New York Norml
- Willow Kitson
- Women of Color in Cannabis