



**IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NAACP OPPOSES THE MEDICAL MARIJUANA EMERGENCY LEGISLATION DUE TO ADVERSE IMPACT ON BLACK I-71 BUSINESSES

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The NAACP DC Branch strongly opposes emergency legislation, Medical Marijuana Patient Access Supplemental Extension and Civil Enforcement Emergency Amendment Act, which will impose civil penalties on Initiative 71 businesses. Chairman Phil Mendelson plans to introduce emergency legislation on Tuesday, April 5, which will have an adverse impact on many Black Initiative 71 business owners in the District. The NAACP and several community coalition partners are urging Chairman Phil Mendelson not to advance this legislation and urging all members of the Council to oppose this legislation, if brought for a vote.

For over 112 years, the NAACP has championed the fight for racial justice and equity as the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. The NAACP advocates for black business development, financial empowerment and sustainable economic opportunities to close the Black wealth gap for future generations. Initiative 71 offers legalized business opportunities for District residents, which supports economic empowerment and financial sustainability for Black business owners in the District of Columbia. African-Americans are largely underrepresented in the licensed cannabis industry whereas most of the I-71 businesses are owned by Black DC Natives. Many African-Americans experience challenges entering this licensed industry. The civil penalties proposed in this legislation will make it harder for many Black-business owners to enter and operate within this licensed system and will adversely affect those who are currently operating under Initiative 71.

Akosua Ali, NAACP DC Branch President, stated, "This legislation is egregious. The fines can put many Black-owned cannabis storefronts out of business. DC's medical marijuana licensing process is racially biased, where many Black businesses were unable to obtain medical marijuana licenses. The perception of cannabis storefronts operating illegally is perpetuated by the medical marijuana industry, which has failed to allow many Black businesses a true seat at the table. This emergency legislation is not the answer. Economic justice requires advancing racial equity in an industry already underrepresented by Black-business owners."

Abiola Agoro, NAACP DC Political Action Chair, stated, "To punish these primarily Black-owned businesses is a heinous act. You cannot help Black DC residents achieve equity while pulling the rug from under those in a system that continues to be stacked against them. There are ways to protect public interests, while offering an equitable path to these business owners. Chairmen Mendelson needs to find a solution ensuring the success, health, and long-term financial stability of Black DC Residents."

For more information, please email naacp@naacpdc.org.

ABOUT NAACP:

Founded in 1909, the NAACP is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. Its members throughout the United States and the world are premier advocates for civil rights in their communities. The mission of NAACP is to ensure the political, educational, social and economic quality of rights of all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination.

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