

Appendix II: Equity Dimensions of the Proposal to Legalize Cannabis for Adult Recreational Use

The Economic Progress Institute (<http://www.economicprogressri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/EPI-Cannabis-Legalization-in-RI-July-2021.pdf>) and other organizations and individuals have raised concerns about equity in the legalization of cannabis, and the budget proposal does address some of these concerns:

- Significantly, the proposal calls for **automatic expungement of criminal records** for offenses that will no longer be criminal. This means the burden and cost of expungement will be upon the state and not require those affected to file for expungement or pay for this.
- However, the proposal prohibits recreational use both indoors in public housing and outdoors, making it **difficult for residents of public housing** to engage in what will otherwise be a perfectly legal activity.
- The proposal also **leaves employers with the authority to fire employees** who engage in this legal activity outside of work.
- The proposal would create the **Governor's Cannabis Reinvestment Task Force**, the responsibilities of which are described in the budget legislation as follows: “[to] present recommendations to the office of cannabis regulation and the office of management and budget specifically relating to the long-term reinvestment of adult use cannabis revenues in existing or new programs or initiatives which shall include, but not be limited to: job training, small business access to capital, affordable housing, health equity, and neighborhood and community development.” In addition, the Task Force’s recommendations “shall contemplate an overall proportion of cannabis revenues to be reinvested in these targeted areas, and shall be made with a specific focus on racial equity, worker and family economic empowerment, the disproportionate impact of cannabis-related law enforcement policies and procedures, and structural barriers to participation in Rhode Island’s cannabis industry.”
- The proposal would require that **at least 20% and a minimum of 5 of the first set of new retail licenses be awarded to minority-owned businesses.**
- The proposal does require a **disparity study**, to be completed by January 1, 2024, to consider whether minority-owned businesses have had access to the new market.