Governor of Maryland Launches Cannabis Employment Program for Former Offenders

Less than two weeks after pardoning over 175,000 marijuana and paraphernalia convictions, Maryland Governor Wes Moore (D) has introduced the Cannabis Workforce Development Program. This innovative initiative, jointly administered by the Maryland Cannabis Administration (MCA) and the Maryland Department of Labor (DOL), aims to facilitate industry participation for individuals historically impacted by cannabis-related criminalization.

Governor's Vision for Equitable Opportunities

In a press release on Thursday, Governor Moore emphasized the program's focus on creating pathways into Maryland's expanding cannabis industry while prioritizing communities disproportionately affected by the War on Drugs.

"This groundbreaking collaboration will support Marylanders interested in joining the state's growing cannabis industry and prioritize individuals and communities directly impacted by the War on Drugs," Governor Moore stated. *"For decades, cannabis policy has been used as a cudgel. Together, we prove how cannabis policy can be used as a valuable tool to leave no one behind."*

Program Details and Benefits

Participants in the program will have access to eight self-paced courses taught by industry experts, licensed marijuana business operators, and college professors, amounting to 100 hours of virtual instruction. Successful completion will culminate in a two-day, in-person occupational training course.

The initiative is designed to lower barriers to employment within the cannabis sector and foster sustainable job opportunities. Applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis starting next Monday.

Expanding Access and Opportunities

Director Will Tilburg of the MCA highlighted the program's focus on providing hands-on experience and job placement support to those adversely affected by cannabis criminalization. The first training site is slated to open in the Baltimore area this November, with plans for expansion across five additional regions over the next year.

[Maryland Department of Labor Secretary Portia Wu](#) underscored the program's commitment to prioritizing residents with prior cannabis-related convictions, aiming to broaden economic prospects through targeted workforce development efforts.

Continued Legislative Efforts and Federal Engagement

Governor *Moore* expressed intentions to collaborate with state lawmakers on expungement initiatives following his recent pardons. The White House has endorsed these actions, aligning with President Biden's broader efforts to address cannabis clemency at the federal level.

In tandem, discussions surrounding federal marijuana rescheduling were highlighted during a recent virtual event featuring Governor Moore and Colorado Governor Jared Polis (D).

Progress in Maryland's Cannabis Policy

Earlier this year, Maryland officials announced the selection of 174 social equity applicants in a pioneering marijuana licensing lottery, encompassing growers, processors, and dispensaries across various license categories. A subsequent lottery was conducted just this past Friday, underscoring Maryland's commitment to advancing equitable cannabis policies.

This initiative marks a significant step towards inclusive economic opportunities and comprehensive cannabis reform in Maryland, reflecting broader efforts to address historical inequities within the industry.