

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OCTOBER 9, 2020

## **CANNABIS COALITION RESPONDS TO GOVERNOR'S ACTION ON S.54 WITH RENEWED EFFORT TO REFORM NEXT SESSION**

Montpelier, VT — While disappointed in hearing that the Governor has allowed the passage of the bill to tax and regulate cannabis, S.54, without signing, our broad coalition of 6 Vermont organizations – Justice For All, Vermont Racial Justice Alliance, NOFA-VT, Rural Vermont, Trace, and Vermont Growers Association – are encouraged that he too acknowledges the inequity at the heart of the bill. The [Governor's statement](#) echoes significant aspects of what we have been communicating throughout this entire legislative biennium – there is work that still needs to be done to make this policy equitable.

We appreciate that the Governor shares our analysis of the bill, that the licensing construct will “disproportionately benefit Vermont's existing medical dispensaries by giving them sole access to integrated licenses and an unfair head start on market access.”

We appreciate that the Governor has joined us in our call for the legislature to improve upon this taxation and regulation policy to ensure equity. It is encouraging that he supports the novel ideas in approaching equity outlined in Illinois policy as suggested by our coalition partner the Racial Justice Alliance such as “creating a social equity applicant category for cannabis establishment licenses; a 50 percent licensing fee waiver for these applicants; and additional technical and financial supports” and more. However, concerns remain around agricultural equity and we implore the legislature to enable small farmers and landowners to utilize agricultural land for cannabis production, and to develop a vertically integrated craft license allowing for on-farm cultivation, processing, and sales for small producers.

We look forward to continuing our advocacy for justice and equality in the emerging cannabis market and to doing so in conjunction with the over 100 farms, organizations, and businesses who have recently expressed their desire to do the same by signing on in support of our work and all other advocates who care to join.

The fact is, most Vermonters want what we want. In the upcoming session we have the opportunity to correct the inequities in S.54 and address racial equity, agricultural, and economic justice shortcomings for the betterment of the State. To the legislators that failed to hear us and failed to stand up for the interests of the BIPOC community and small rural farmers we say- whose side are you on? Now that this bill has passed, will you work with us as you offered, in the coming session to improve this legislation?

This has never been about politics for us. It has been about equity, about right and wrong. Over the past months and years, out-of-state lobbyists and monied interests have influenced the conversation and gaslit Vermonters as well as our local media outlets into working against our local interest. Now is the time for us to come together and ensure that this policy fairly considers local BIPOC and women-owned business applicants, small Vermont growers and entrepreneurs and repairs the harms done through the criminalization of this plant.

Justice For All  
Vermont Racial Justice Alliance  
NOFA-VT

Rural Vermont  
Trace  
Vermont Growers Association

*About the Coalition: We are a coalition of Vermont organizations and businesses representing the diverse communities across the state – from the local BIPOC, agriculture, and environmental communities, law, and criminal justice, to the hemp and cannabis communities – that have come together to forge an inclusive, just, and equitable cannabis platform for Vermont.*