

[inaudible]

Hello and welcome to the higher enlightenment podcast brought to you by higher yields cannabis consulting, your seed to sale business solutions team. My name is Adam, your host, and part of the creative team here at higher yields. Today's episode number 25 deals with east coast opportunity. Who's doing legalization and social equity, right? We'll be concentrating on the states of New Jersey, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia, our guests for today, or Natasha Neptune, Alicia Royster, Emily Steelman, and Mercedes woods. So welcome and let's get on with the show. So let's begin by having you guys introduce yourselves. Let's start with Natasha. Could you give us a little background on yourself and tell us what you do?

Well, my name is Natasha Neptune. I am the president and one of the co-founders of seen social equity empowerment network. My background is in automation and engineering and automation. So, uh, I've been in the candy slash confectionary slash consumer goods industry for over 20 years and, uh, started getting into urban gardening and it became a passion of mine. And then started kind of looking towards this cannabis industry for an opportunity to take that craft and what I've learned and enter into the cannabis industry. So along the journey of met, uh, several other black people who are interested in entering into this space, uh, not only to think about, you know, their own, you know, the, not only to think about, um, you know, opportunities to expand into a new industry, but also a way to impact, um, their community. So that's a little bit about myself. Well,

Thanks for being here in Natasha. Emily, could you give us a little background on yourself?

Sure. Um, my name is Emily Steelman. I'm the senior technical writer, uh, at higher yields. I am, um, a former civil litigator and myself. So I practiced law in Pennsylvania, uh, for a few years before, uh, really seen a need in the industry for qualified consultants that weren't, um, screwing people over for lack of better words, and really charging them a green tax and using that money that they were charging their clients to actually learn the industry. So I, uh, approached the industry when cannabis was getting introduced in Pennsylvania and saw a couple of things shifting in the industry. One being social equity programs, two being applications kind of provided, um, for specialized groups, female owned businesses, veteran owned businesses, minority owned businesses. And, um, I also saw kind of how that shift in laws occurred in the east coast and Midwest making a very different program.

It practically speaking from west coast, uh, cannabis operations. So when I saw all of those things happening, I really saw a need in this space for, uh, the work ethic and work product of an attorney in this space. So, uh, I, I went fully into the cannabis industry after that started my own firm, uh, linked up with higher yields and, uh, curated a team of writers and editors from their own variety of backgrounds, uh, big pharma, uh, FDA compliance educators, uh, federal procurement for our Naval nuclear program engineers. And together we've kind of made this team that understands applications from a technical writing perspective from an applicables perspective, like boots on the ground. Um, but most importantly, in my opinion, from a regulatory perspective. So during that time, I, I got a glimpse of how, um, how unfair this industry can be for so many people, despite well-intended legislators and advocates, um, and, and really felt a need to, you know, whenever I had the opportunity to, to speak on those types of topics and really co call that to the forefront, um, particularly because I have the glimpse on the inside of what goes wrong when people are, when state's great applications and they can have the best type of program, social equity program, things like that.

What, what happens between that legislation and then the grading of applications to award licenses that riff that happens. I see it every single state. Um, so when I have the opportunity to speak on it, I did Well, thank you, Alicia, could you give us a little background on yourself?

I am the vice president of the social equity empowerment network, also known as saying. And so we were, um, we are a consortium of social equity, businesses and entrepreneurs that are here interested in being a part of the, uh, cannabis industry. We're an Illinois, but we advocate across the country. Um, my background is in risk management, so I'm also bringing risk management consulting to the space and insurance and everything risks and the cannabis industry. Um, but as far as seeing as concerned, I am a registered lobbyists, um, out of Illinois, as well as just an azaleas advocate, uh, for social equity, as Emily was stating, there are several, um, inadequacies as it relates to, um, uh, the deficiency of, uh, diversity. And so we are really fighting to make sure that they're, um, that this industry looks and is represented by the people of the country.

Okay. Thank you. Mercedes, could you give us a little background on yourself and tell us what you do?

I'm Mercedes woods. I've worked with HYC as the compliance specialist and project manager. Um, before my time with HYC, I worked in the industry as an operations manager for dispensary's on the retail side of things. And I also noticed, uh, pretty immediately the lack of diversity within the industry and within dispensary's, um, from management to bud tending to growers, um, and all around. Um, and as a hiring manager, um, I made it a point to make sure that I was giving those equal opportunities wherever I could. Um, so it's really important to me. Um, and I think that, you know, having these conversations, um, just like Emily said, is something that I, I really enjoy being a part of, um, and really happy to work with. Um, another group that's really going to be pushing for more diversity and more equal opportunity within the industry. So I'm really excited about that. And, um, that's kinda kind of my role and a lot of it was more surrounding, you know, compliance and regulations, um, and helping them in those areas.

Thank you, Mercedes, onto our first question, what states are doing thorough social equity program, right.

Um, I would like to say that I am just thrilled to see what's going on in the Northeast and just to see how they are really trying to carefully look at social equity and the totality of it. You know, it's, you know, funding is a critical element to social equity and trying to put together a framework that will, uh, position those that were disproportionately harmed by the war on drugs, on a path to success. So, I mean, just for myself, I really do like the way that, um, New Jersey has put together their set asides and the way that their legislators, the, the, the person who's in charge of their cannabis regulation is really trying to connect with those people who are very, um, in tune to the industry. So I do appreciate the opportunities of these set asides and, and taking a look at the 15%, um, taking a look and very being very deliberate with funding.

So I think there's a lot of elements from the, from whether it's Connecticut, New Jersey. I know New York is trying to pull some of those things out from what New Jersey is doing and some aspects of what, what Maryland's doing, um, that is going to be key to success and creating, um, ownership in the industry. I mean, we do like the opera, the, um, their stance on trying to protect these licenses. I think that's very, very important and it's, you know, establishing, you know, funding and, um, making sure that ownership is maintained. So, uh, Connecticut has a zero interest loans for social equity applicants that's being proposed and just making sure that we go first and I think sometimes people think of it as a, as an after afterthought, but no, I really do like, uh, some of the, um, positions that some of these states are looking at.

So I don't think one state has got it down, you know, 100%. Right. But I think there are elements from the, you know, whether it's Connecticut, Maryland, New Jersey and Massachusetts that are working towards putting together a program that really truly work, um, and moving forward. And I do like the fact that there's no, um, some of these states have no caps and there's no like, Hey, if you have some basic questions, some that if you meet the qualifications, you would be able to apply. And I think that's a

very important as you look to some of the other states that do have, um, limiting licensing, um, as in that I think also creates a barrier. So I do like those aspects.

Yeah. I, I would agree completely. I really liked how Illinois, even though it has been wrought with issues, as far as the actual grading goes, they really made a, a big attempt and they were very vocal about it from the beginning to try to include, not try. They were actually aiming to include, um, social equity applicants. It fell apart during the grading aspect, but that, you know, that's kind of a, an issue we can talk about, of course. But, um, I liked that they were saying, we want to set a new standard here and we want it to start with us and we want to take responsibility for that. Um, so I, I did appreciate that. And I appreciated that when it all went wrong, governor Pritzker and sure everyone, you know, I don't trust any politicians. Um, and, um, there was a lot of pressure on him to not award these licenses, to the MSLS who claim to be social equity applicants.

Um, you know, there was a lot of issues there, but he ultimately said, we need to pause this program and reset and figure this out. And I, I mean, out of all the states I've worked in so far, I have yet to see that verbal step being taken to say, okay, let's, let's be a little more transparent about this because it is costly to appeal a license or a grading of an application, and to appeal that process and multi-state operators, they know how this game is one, they know how to look good. They, and I'm not, I'm all about making money. I'm all about successful businesses, but equality of opportunity is a big deal. And, um, similar to what you were saying, the, the funding is a huge issue. So there's, um, I mean, there's a lot of facets to it. I just liked the transparency that Illinois to an extent has provided.

I don't think any state has done it perfectly. I don't think legislation is ever perfect. Um, but I saw a hue and it was, it was largely because of the advocacy of the people pushing it and New Jersey, the same thing, the people push this and advocated for this, and it is there that is their baby. And they will see this thing through. And I was recently on a clubhouse talk when New Jersey was when the mayor or the governor signed the bill. And, um, everyone was really proud of the steps that they had taken and the hard work that they took to get this passed. And my warning to them was don't stop because whenever there's caps on licenses and things like that, um, you don't know what's going on in the background with multi-state operators and their lobbyists who were trying to set caps who are trying to corner the market. So you have one yes, and congratulate yourself and breathe and celebrate, but don't stop because your voice needs to get louder. You have to push harder because when it comes to the grainy, when it comes to the actual structure of the regulations and the emergency rules, that's where the fight really starts. And, um, so I'm hopeful about New Jersey and what's going to happen there. And I agree, New York is modeling after New Jersey. So I'm excited about that too.

Yeah. I think to answer your question, Adam, none of the state's savvy, right? I think it's a hybrid, a hybrid, uh, uh, the west coast, some of the things that I see in California and the Oakland area with their social equity programs and actually putting real life, tangible resources in the hands of the people that need them, as well as going down south to Oklahoma, where it's an open market, although you dealt with flooding of the market, potentially you actually, if you are eligible, you fit the criteria you apply, you do all that you need to do to show that you're worthy of a license, you get a license, you run your business just as any other industry in the country. And I think that, um, the fact that we play such a precipice, knowing that the dollar value is there and we allow a certain demographic of people.

So monopolize the markets, um, beforehand is where all of this problem, all of the problems lie, that's where all of the lobbyists dollars can come in and where all of the problems come in with scoring and all of the back door issues that we are, we're only privy to when you're, when you're in the room. And so I think that if we can, if I really think that unfortunately the open market or satisfies is probably the way and the states to take those routes, um, we're probably far more successful in making sure that there's an even playing field, um, in this industry.

Yeah. That open market with a low barrier to entry that costs like it's cost prohibitive in a lot of states. But I agree with you, Oklahoma is a great state to model because you can go in shore, it's lower prices, but that makes it less attractive for multi-state operators and more attractive for people like us who just want to get in and participate in the industry. Um, I agree with that.

Absolutely.

I mean, I love how Maryland is trying to make sure that social equity applicants have a headstart into the industry. You know, the fact that they see this before they can move forward with anything and they actually postponed, you know, and took a step back cause they saw the impact that the MSAs were having on the industry and Illinois is still, we're still battling it out. Trust me, we're still battling it out because you know that there is a lack of, um, ownership in this industry. And it's still something that Illinois has to strive for. And there's a huge opportunity to include funding because the funding is, has expired, you know, in terms of the social equity inclusion plan that has expired with the current legislation. And so there's still a push to try to, um, include that and include some of the other policies that will have a great impact on supporting social equity applicants moving forward, and really eliminating those barriers of entry.

Okay. Out of the states that we are discussing which ones aren't doing things, right.

I haven't seen much movement with West Virginia. Right. But I think they're still stuck. You know, so, but I think as we take a look at some of the other states around there, I think that will force some of these other states to really take a look and see, because obviously there's a lot of missed opportunities. If you take a look at the industry, there's a huge economic opportunity associated with it. So people have got to be concerned with jobs. So I think out of some of the states that we were going to be discussing today, I think West Virginia is behind.

I mean, I'm still waiting to see the results for Illinois. It was such a strong progress and there was so much hope. And then you see the results. And so just by way of background, they allowed a, basically the top scores got into a lottery and they would draw from that lottery, who would be the ultimate winners and it, as it panned out, despite, you know, social equity provisions, um, they selected multi-state operators. And there was one that was allegedly connected to the grading company. And so where I see a big issue is, um, and this happens in a number of states who outsource their grading to financial auditing firms. In my opinion, they're not, they're not qualified because they don't understand all of the subjective measurements, the qualitative measurements you have to have when you're grading applications, you're going to compare someone who's underfunded against a multi-state operator who has done this and can hire all the lobbyists who can pull out of their connections, who can hire consultants, who can hire law firms and put together this robust package that can really stand out.

And when you have a financial auditing firm that you're using degrade applications, they may not recognize that both of these are quality applications, one's just better funded. And what you know, so you can't do that with, you're running these things through a computer, if you're just outsourcing and then outsourcing those subcontractors, which is what some of these companies do, and they don't know how to grade these. Um, and so that's where you can really see it fall apart. So, um, Illinois for me right now was teetering on a really great model or a really bad model. So depending on how grading goes,

Well, guys, let me just tell you if you're going to bring up Illinois, Illinois is teetering and as will, whether or not our legislators and the people have the will to do it right. Um, just to be transparent we're applicants and seen was founded by social equity applicants for social equity applicants for this reason. And it is to take a stand and make sure the policies that are going to be pushed forward are going to be for all individuals, not just for 21, well connected businesses in an opportunity to get a license for 75, you know, 75 licenses. That's just unconscionable. And if we're going to bring up Illinois, let's bring it up because we're still at a point where we're waiting. We're still trying to work through the legislation and

help educate our legislators as it relates to really creating social equity policies and taking what we've seen from some of these other states and trying to embed that into our policy.

And there just seems to be a disconnect there guys, there seems to be a disconnect in Illinois, and there's a lot of influence by these MSLS in our policy generation. And, you know, the people need to be made aware of that. I mean, like I was saying, the funding has expired and there hasn't been a will to go back and, and extend that. And that is, that's not right. You know, trying to create opportunities for us to be business owners and trying to create all these convoluted, you know, using emergency rules and this new legislation. And I'd like for you to talk a little bit more about that and how that potentially impacts us, and now adding relocation into this legislation that will allow existing medical dispensary businesses to be able to move potentially even before social X, this so-called lottery happens. I mean, it's unconscionable, you know, it's unbelievable. So I mean, there's a lot of, you know, we're, we're at a point now at a crossroads in Illinois, are we going to do what's right? Are we just going to, you know, be like LA and be in limbo tricks? Yes. Go ahead, Felicia. No,

I was just saying politics like everywhere else. I, politics, faith plays a big role in it. Um, big, you know, the MSLS play a big role in it. Like you said, Emily they're well-funded. So they're able to play the lobbying game and she pushed the politicians their way to get, to get the outcome that they want. And so here we are now with less than 1% ownership, um, even across the country, there's only one or 2% ownership, um, for black and brown people, which is, is quite disturbing and quite alarming when you have the fact that, um, first of all, people were locked up for this same business practice when it was just illegal yesterday. And you have people that are still locked up today when it's legal and people are getting rich on the other side of the fence. And then it's even more alarming that, you know, the, like I said, the consumers, it's not reflective of the consumers and, and reflective of, uh, of, of our nation. And, and it's, it's, it's, it's just, it's, it's, it's sad. It's very disturbing.

Yeah. And the, the challenge too, is if they allow relocation of existing medical dispensary's, then you kind of are faced with what we're seeing in Arizona, which is they allowed early applicants to go through a lottery. And then they designed their social equity program, which they're doing right now and granted to there. I think, I think it's a great thing that they're getting public input. They're truly leaning on the advocates to help them design this. Um, but this is all going to happen after all of these people pass their audits, get started getting revenue. And now the social equity program is going to start months. If not a year after. And to me, everyone's just set at a disadvantage and it's like, that's why I tend to go back to open up the market, just lower the barrier and let everybody in. I mean, I get it.

There's this draw to be part of a competitive industry where you can make tons of money. It's a cash cow, but, but it's it, to me, it's a loss because you're excluding so many people from this industry who deserve to be in it because they're actually qualified. But you're, I'm sorry, if you can hear that in your plane, I live near a smaller airport. Um, but you're, you're restricting people who are very qualified, um, because they don't have the lobbyists to pay. Um, and, and then when you are allowing them in like Arizona, all of the best locations in Arizona are picked because they had a really stringent county, uh, cap. So cap on licenses per county. Yeah. And now, so I keep, I keep adding comments to the, to the, um, commission and saying, please open up the, the counties, let them pick, just let social equity applicants pick.

And then on the flip side, you, when you're grading these, you have to determine that these are actually social equity applicants. I can't tell you how many people have said, yeah, I got offered \$500 in 1% equity. That's going to change my life. And I say, you should be getting six figures and 51% real equity equity. And because they're asking for 51% equity ownership by social equity applicant, you know, no matter what the definition is per state, that differs a little bit, but you see multi-state operators coming in and saying, well, we'll pay you that here you look great. You sound great. You're a woman. You're,

African-American, you're a veteran. This is perfect. You, you check all the boxes and we're going to give you \$500, you know, or, Hey, you need rent paid, we'll pay your rent. And it's like, they're, they're, they're hurting a lot. It's so unethical.

Yeah, same here. You know, people were literally a pod upon the applications seeing, um, if you know, the bat line they're knocking on doors, you know, and these areas that are, you know, and they were literally soliciting applicants, um, by way of knocking on doors. So the lack of knowledge, and, you know, it's a brand new industry, it's a budding industry. So, you know, so w when, when people are not familiar with everything is a state and exactly what, what the earning potential is, and just not familiar with the industry at all. Everybody's agreeing I did it again. So we, we are, we're literally, we're faced with a lack of a lack of information, lack of knowledge. And people are just not aware of exactly. What's, what's at stake here. So they're signing their name on the dotted line on millions of dollars of businesses and walking away with, you know, one month's rent it's, it's, it's a bad thing. Yes.

Predatory practices is happening across the country, P these, you know, some of these businesses are going in and they're like, okay, we need, you know, a black face or a brown face, and really taking advantage of people. And like, like, you all were saying, it's lack of knowledge and information, and people are selling themselves short and people just don't know,

Okay, we already touched on some of this a bit, but what are the biggest challenges facing the industry in these states?

Well, my thoughts are a lot of influence by these existing MSLs. A lot of lobbying efforts, a lot of money being exchanged and people being influenced. I think that's having a major impact on really enabling us to move to where we need to go. If, if w if we're really truly thinking about social equity and its importance actions speak louder than words, but a lot of these MSOE are saying, but they're doing other things that, you know, to protect their own interests. Of course, um, these licensing caps and limited, limited licensing states, I think that's creating just another barrier. So opening up, being able to open up the opportunity. I think we need to kind of move away from that model. And, uh, when we think about social equity funding has to be a part of that and making sure that social equity applicants will have, um, some, some financing options, um, 0% interest loans that will help them be able to start up their businesses and, uh, and be successful and protecting these licenses from these MSOE and other businesses that want to just go ahead and, you know, and buy them. And like I said, I, I love there was, you know, once they, I think as New York is looking at prohibiting the sale and transfer of their licenses within the first three years. And I think that's, you know, that's going to be important, uh, to protect this industry for social equity applicants.

I also agree, I think that with the social equity programs, there also needs to be continued training and support, um, for them as business owners and more capital is always needed as you continue through your business. And I think that there needs to be support on the way, not just right at the beginning or not just a, we're going to give this many licenses to applicants, or they're going to get extra points and sure they get the license. And that's great. That's a start, but that's not the whole, the whole thing. We need more, they need support through five years of this business running, um, and to be protected against some of these predatory practices of people coming in and buying their businesses out right away, because they didn't have the initial support they needed to begin with. So their business starts to fail, or they can't get the capital that they need, um, or the funding that they need, and someone comes in and takes advantage of that.

So I think long-term plans with the social equity programs or what has to happen for them to be successful. And it just, like we said earlier, you know, that means that none of these programs, or, you know, successful at this time, because there isn't that long term, um, practice practices happening and training happening. Um, and I think that any program it's any, any state that's looking to incorporate

social equity programs really, really needs to address that issue. Um, and really think about that and how is this going to help people long-term and not just make us look good, like we're doing something in the short term and get the bill passed.

I think there's, um, from the state of Massachusetts, they do have a social equity program, and it's kind of like a, you know, some kind of program that they want their social equity applicants to go through to kind of help them learn about the business and training. But there are social equity applicants are frustrated with that program because, you know, some of them had said like, we've gone through the program, we've gone through the application process. And yet we still have a limited few people being able to get these licenses. And then the organizations that they're going through for this training or these classes, those entities are also applying for licenses. And there's a lack of transparency with that. And there's a lot of frustration. So, you know, if we're going to be doing this, we have to make sure that you know, that there is transparency and that we are making sure that, like I said, this, this process and this opportunity is open to everyone.

I think, um, there was a point mentioned earlier about, um, just the inadequacies and the scoring and how you have so many different pools of people, just to your point. Um, if you are, if you are a trainer, you shouldn't actually, as a coach, be in the race with, with, with, with your students. And so that's a common issue. And I think it makes, it makes me think about just the scoring process and how we do need to probably bucket these, these different types of applications. If you're a multi-state operator, of course you should, you should be in a different pool from people that are social equity applicants that don't have the funding, the resources and the wherewithal, and, and quite frankly, you know, the industry knowledge, um, as, as, as an MSL would. And I think there should be some, some different grading scales as it relates to that, as well as fine-tuning exactly, uh, how we are engaging these third party, um, um, vendors and scores that are over overseeing this.

What kind of knowledge do they have? Um, here in Illinois, it was a, it was a debacle to the point where, um, they were exposed for having a recent college grads with very little, um, very little knowledge of, of cannabis, of the process of the statute. They didn't even know the law. Um, there were, there were some of these contractors employees that were even calling in and complaining about not having, um, being equipped to grade these and fill in an adequate. And so I think that that is very important because ultimately this is the destiny of someone's business or life in your hands. And you're, you don't even have the capacity to fully, fully vet out these applications properly. That's an issue. Um, I can't stress enough how important, um, resources are. And like, and like Mercedes was saying, just not at the beginning, but throughout, um, as laws change as things change.

Um, we don't people that don't have lobbyists on staff to know that this is being heard today or a particular law is being amended. Um, these are things that, of course, you know, as you learn, you know, you said, do your due diligence, of course you'd take that on, but another larger corporation is more equipped to have that service in those, in those resources on hand on staff, equity is not just about equality. Equity is definitely providing one the resources that they need to be at an equal playing field. And I think that once we recognize the importance of providing people with not only the funds, um, through the industry, I mean, this is a lucrative industry. So you can use some of those tax funds to filter back into the proper programs or the proper business owners, or do a pilot program for some of your social equity applicants, where you're providing a certain amount of funding, um, by way of loan, no interest loans or grants, if you will.

Um, I think that that's really, really important. And I just echo being able to provide those resources as well as safeguard the licenses as well as safe safeguarding. The opportunities in general from predatory practices are just key. Um, if, if, if any takeaways from what, what can be changed, um, the predatory practices are just, it's massive. And so when you think about people that have the resources that literally

are sculpting the country as these laws flip, and they're going to these countries and these communities all across the country and, and honing in on, on all of these people that just don't know any better, that's an issue that definitely needs to be addressed. And I haven't seen many states even address it at all.

Okay. Thank you. What in, where are the most significant opportunities for social equity applicants?

Well, I think there's a huge opportunity and the hemp space, um, I mean, you have all kinds of niche markets that you can create in that industry. So I think that's also a huge opportunity. Um, as we take a look at home delivery, I think those are also some opportunities for, um, for applicants as well. And it's not just about plant touching, but there's also non plant touching opportunities that we can explore and, and help people, you know, gain entry into the industry. And I think a lot of people may not be fully aware of those opportunities. And I think, um, you know, I think you have to take a look at all these alternatives, because as we've seen, as the states move from medical to recreational, there are delays. Now these delays could be done on purpose, which they probably are. And I think, you know, as applicants as we get into this industry, we do have to have our plan B and our plan C. And that's something that we definitely have started to really communicate to social equity applicants, because you just don't know how things are going to move. So you definitely have to make sure you have a plan B and plan C option. That'll really allow you to kind of, you know, get yourself, um, you know, press forward. And as you know, the states flush out policies and execution and, um, you know, and to see, you know, uh, what, how we can move forward. I

Think people don't realize that the opportunities are limitless. I mean, ultimately this was a brand new industry that intersects with so many other industries. So like myself, for instance, I am a risk manager. Um, insurance intersects with cannabis attorneys intersect with cannabis, as you can see accountants, I mean, people that are making packaging, um, people that are shifts and cooking. I think that a lot of times we look at the shiny object and not realize that there's so many different things that surround this industry that make it work. I hear, um, uh, I dunno, uh, old tale and they say, well, you know, this is like a gold rush and who got rich in the gold rush, not necessarily people that found gold, but the people that supplied to pick some of the shovels. And so when you think about that concept and you think about all the inner workings of a new industry and how they need carpentry, they need contractors. They need every working part of what a regular industry would need. Then you can see that your, your, um, your discipline that you're already in for 20 years may be quite lucrative as well in this industry. So I, I think that, uh, I encourage most people to take a holistic approach and looking at the value that they currently have in the skillsets that they currently have and how they can plug into the industry in whatever way that is.

I think, uh, both of you make really great points about that. And after the Illinois debacle, that actually sprung HYC to start thinking about their pivot program and kind of trying to, you know, help these people of, Hey, this isn't working out for your plan a isn't working. So what are those plans? Um, should we go to, you know, a state that has, you know, a more open, uh, application process? So what does Oklahoma look like to you? How do you feel about that? Um, you know, hemp is another great option. Um, and then I think that, you know, just, just like Felicia was saying, ancillary businesses are, are, are just as important. And, um, thinking of all of those options, I think are, are really important to the process as well. Um, you know, if the states aren't going to do what they need to do and some of them right now, and I think what's important is getting more people involved in every facet of the industry. And maybe it's not necessarily just, um, opening your doors in a dispensary and maybe, you know, you found a niche that, you know, passionate about even, or have more knowledge facing or, um, you know, really know how to make work for you. Um, I think that that's really important when talking with people is to offer them all the options and that, you know, you don't just have to have a grill or run a dispensary. I think there's so much more out there in this industry than just that

I think we covered a lot of ground so far, um, before we wind up. Uh, does anybody have any final thoughts?

Well, I wanna thank you all for inviting us to have this discussion because it's very important because I think especially Illinois is at a very pivotal point in this process and it's whether or not we do have the will to do what's right. Um, and, and, and, and learn from what we've seen from other states. You know, this is, this is huge. I mean, we are connecting with people in New Jersey, people in LA people in Oakland, and, you know, this is an opportunity for us. And I just want to say, if you would like to learn more about us, I have to tell you, you can find us at WW dot equity, empower.org. And, um, like I said, we want you to join us. Um, this is our, our trade associations, not just about plant touching businesses. Uh, this is an inclusive industry. I mean, we want to connect with our plumbers, our carpenters, our architects, um, and this is about bringing these businesses together to really, uh, create an ecosystem that will help transform our communities, as we seen, who were so devastated, devastated by the war on drugs. And so please reach out to us if you have any questions we are here is we're just not about Illinois. This is about bringing that transformation across the country, into our communities. So once again, I'd love to thank you. Um, I will share, we'll share our email information with you all, and definitely feel free to reach out to us.

Um, yeah. Thank you, Adam. Obviously another great podcast. I really appreciate it. Um, you know, I guess just to close it out, I don't want to feel, you know, come across, like I'm negative about every state in their programs. Um, there's just, there's a lot of work to do. And I'm, first of all, I love that it's the, it's the court of the public that has, that has set this example and push this progress. I am just, it is you can't legislate hearts, but you can advocate for good policies. Ethical business practices, businesses are focused on their bottom lines. Ethical business owners are focused on how they can make more money to do more good. And that was a line that I learned from my mentor, Jason Cisneros. He, he taught my business, my company, that model, um, you know, good business owners will make more money, get more time so they can do more good. And I think that's lost in this industry right now, but the advocates that are trying to get into the industry want to see that and they know firsthand how to bring more good to more people. And, and I'm just like, like we were saying this isn't, isn't just about Illinois. This is about every state across the country and pushing for change so that we can get more good people doing more good things in this industry.

I love it. I think that that should close it out, actually. I mean, and that's, that's it, we, we, we, we know the history of this industry. And so if we really want to pay homage and do the right thing, I think that that is exactly the direction needs to be going. And, um, if I can leave the world with any more, I would just say, plug me in. Um, if you have not been aware of the industry or even paying attention to it, I think that this is something that you only get every few lifetimes or have a few generations where a brand new industry with the capability of making millions and billions of dollars of revenue and changing communities, um, your community and communities across the country or the world, if you, if you will, um, in your lifetime, and everybody can get a piece of this, I have a part of it. Um, if we all plug in and making sure that social equity and equitable opportunities are at the helm of this industry, um, we can all, we can all fight the good fight and, and, and, and really play a role in it.

Well, thank you, ladies. I think we, uh, had a lot of great information on a very important subject, and I'd like to thank you very much for being on our show today. For more information about the social equity, empowerment network, otherwise known as seen check out [www equity, empower dot O R G](http://www.equityempower.org). We'd like to thank everybody for tuning in today and listening to our podcast for information on how to follow the higher enlightenment podcast. Please be sure to check out the description below you'll receive all the latest and greatest podcasts, news and announcements. We'll also let you know when we release new episodes. If you'd like to be a guest on the higher enlightenment podcasts or have ideas about upcoming episodes, please be sure to check out the description below for information about sponsorship or

advertising on the higher enlightenment podcast. Please call us at eight four, four high yield that's eight four four H I Y I E L D. Or visit our website@higheryieldsconsulting.com. Thanks. Have a great day. And we'll talk to you. [inaudible].