

# Episode 25 East Coast Legalization and Social Equity

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## SPEAKERS

Mercedes Woods, Natascha Neptune, Emily Seelman, Belicia Royster, Adam Kulbach

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Adam Kulbach 00:12

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 are Natasha Neptune, Alicia Royster, Emily Siegelman 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?



Natascha Neptune 01:20

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 I've been in the candy slash confectionery slash consumer goods industry for over 20 years, and 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, I've met several other black people who are interested in entering into this space, not only to think about, you know, their own, you know, that not only think about, you know, opportunities to expand into a new industry, but also a way to impact their communities. So that's a little bit about myself.



Adam Kulbach 02:25

Well, thanks for being here. Natasha. Emily, could you give us a little background on yourself? Sure.

**E****Emily Seelman 02:33**

My name is Emily Steelman. I'm the Senior Technical Writer at higher yields. I am a former civil litigator, myself, so I practice law in Pennsylvania, for a few years before really seen a need in the industry for qualified consultants that weren't 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 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, to being applications kind of provided for specialized groups, female owned businesses, veteran owned businesses, minority owned businesses. And I also saw kind of how that shift in laws occurred in the East Coast Midwest, making a very different program it practically speaking from West Coast cannabis operations. So when I saw all of those things happening, I really saw a need in the space for the work ethic and work product of an attorney in this space. So I, I went fully into the cannabis industry after that started my own firm, linked up with high yields and curated a team of writers and editors from their own variety of backgrounds, Big Pharma, FDA compliance educators, 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 applicable bulls perspective, like boots on the ground. But most importantly, in my opinion, from a regulatory perspective, so during that time, I got a glimpse of how, how unfair this industry can be for so many people, despite well intended legislators and advocates, and really felt a need to, you know, whenever I had the opportunity to speak on those types of topics, and really call that to the forefront, particular Lee because I have the glimpse on the inside of what goes wrong when people are when states great applications, and they can have the best type of programs, social equity program, things like that. What what happens between that legislation, and then the grading of applications toward licenses, that RIF that happens? I see it every single state So when I had the opportunity to speak on it, I did.

**A****Adam Kulbach 05:03**

Well, thank you, Alicia, can you give us a little background on yourself?

**B****Belicia Royster 05:09**

I am the Vice President of the social equity Empowerment Network, also known as sane. And so we were, we are a consortium of social equity businesses and entrepreneurs that are here interested in being a part of the cannabis industries. We're in Illinois, but we advocate across the country. My background is in risk management. So I'm also bringing risk management consulting to the space and insurance and everything risks in the cannabis industry. But as far as theme is concerned, I am a registered lobbyists out of Illinois as well as just a zealous advocate for social equity, as Emily was stating, there are several inadequate C's as it relates to the deficiency of diversity in the space. And so we are really fighting to make sure that there that this industry looks is represented by the people of the country. Okay,

**A****Adam Kulbach 06:13**

thank you, Mercedes, could you give us a little background on yourself and tell us what you do?  
Hi,

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Mercedes Woods 06:19

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

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Adam Kulbach 07:34

Thank you, Mercedes. On to our first question, what states are doing their social equity program? Right?

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Natascha Neptune 07:44

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 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 you jury 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 in tune to the industry. So I do appreciate the opportunities of the set asides and taking a look at the 15% 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 and 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 is doing. That is going to be key to success and creating ownership in the industry. I mean, we do like the, the, 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 making sure that ownership is maintained. So Connecticut has 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 an afterthought, afterthought, but no, I really do like some of the 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 and when Going forward, and I do like the fact that there's no, some of these states have no caps. And there is no like, Hey, if you have some basic, some that if you meet the

qualifications, you would be able to apply. And I think that's very important as you look to some of the other states that do have limiting licensing. And that I think, also creates a barrier. So I do like those aspects.

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Emily Seelman 10:25

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 big attempt. And they were very vocal about it from the beginning, to try to include not try, they were actually aiming to include 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 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. So I did appreciate that. And I appreciated that when it all went wrong, Governor Pritzker, and sure he's ever been, you know, I don't trust any politicians. And there was a lot of pressure on him to not award these licenses to the MSOs, who claim to be social equity applicants. 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 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 multistate operators, they know how this game is won, 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 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 like 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. But I saw a huge and it was it was largely because of the advocacy of the people pushing it. and New Jersey, that same thing that people push this and advocated for this, and it is their, that is their baby. And they will see this thing through. And I was recently on a clubhouse tuck when New Jersey was when the mayor or the governor signed the bill. And everyone was really proud of the steps that they had taken in 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, you don't know what's going on in the background with multi state operators and our lobbyists who are 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 rolls, that's where the fight really starts. And 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.

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Belicia Royster 13:36

I think to answer your question, Adam, none of the states have it right. I think it's a hybrid, a hybrid of 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 deal with flooding of the market, potentially, you actually if you are eligible, you've 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 win your business, just as any other industry in the country. And

I think that the fact that we play such a precipice knowing that the dollar value was there, and we allow a certain demographic of people to monopolize the market 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 backdoor issues that we are we're only privy to when you're when you're in in the room. And so I think that if we can if I really think that unfortunately open market or set asides is probably the way and the states to take those routes. We're probably far more successful and making sure that there's an even playing field in this industry.

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Emily Seelman 14:55

Yeah, that open market with a low barrier to entry that costs pro 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 and shorts, 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. I agree with that.

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Natascha Neptune 15:20

I mean, I love how Marilyn, is trying to make sure that social equity applicants have a head start into the industry, you know, the fact that they see this before they can move forward with anything. And they actually postponed, you know, it took a step back, because they saw the impact that the MSOs 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 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 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.

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Adam Kulbach 16:26

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

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Natascha Neptune 16:33

Well, we haven't seen much movement with West Virginia, right, that 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's is behind.

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Emily Seelman 17:11

I mean, we're still waiting to see the results. For Illinois, it was such a strong progress, and there

I mean, I'm still waiting to see the results. For Illinois, it was such a strong progress, and there was so much help, and then you see the results and that that. So just by way of background, they allowed, basically, the top scorers got into a lottery, and they withdraw from that lottery, who would be the ultimate winners. And it as it panned out, despite, you know, social equity provisions, 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, 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 over 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 to grade 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. And so that's where you can really see it fall apart. So Illinois, for me right now was teetering on a really great model or a really bad model. So depending on how grading goes,

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Natascha Neptune 18:51

Well, guys, let me just tell you, so if you're going to bring up Illinois, Illinois is teetering and is willing, whether or not our legislators and the people have the will to do it right. 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 and 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 And there's a lot of influence by these MSOs 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 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 that's new legislation. And I'd like to, 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 act, this so called lottery happens. I mean, it's unconscionable, you know, it's, it's unbelievable. So, I mean, there's a lot of, you know, we're at a point now at a crossroads in Illinois. Are we going to do what's right? Or are we just going to, you know, be like LA and be in limbo? You know, what's your number? Yes, go ahead, Felicia.

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Belicia Royster 21:11

No, I was just saying politics, like everywhere else, and politics, plays plays a big role in it. Big, you know, the MSOs play a big role in it, like you said, Emily, they're well funded. So they're able to play the lobbying game and to be much the politicians their way to get to get the

able to play the lobbying game and to, to push the politicians their way to get to get the outcome that they want. And so that, here we are now with less than 1% ownership. Even across the country, there's only one or 2% ownership for black and brown people, which is quite disturbing, quite alarming, when you have the fact that 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 reflective of, of our nation. And it's just, it's, it's very disturbing.

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Emily Seelman 22:11

Yeah, and the, the challenge too, is if they allow relocation of existing medical dispensaries, 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 design their social equity program, which I'm 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. But this is all going to happen. After all of these people, pass their audits and have 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 sat at a disadvantage. And it's like to 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 airplane. I live near a small airport. But you're you're restricting people who are very qualified, because they don't have the lobbyists to pay. 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 cap. So cap on licenses per county. Yeah. And now so I keep I keep adding comments to the to the commission and saying, please open up 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 and 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 veteran, this is perfect. You you check all the boxes, and we're gonna give you \$500 You know, or hey, you need rent paid, we'll pay your rent and it's like, they're theirs. They're hurting a lot. It's so unethical.

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Belicia Royster 24:47

Oh, gosh. Yeah, same here. You know, people were literally upon upon the applications being, you know, the BeltLine, they're knocking on doors, you know, in these areas that are you and they were literally soliciting applicants by way of knocking on doors. So the lack of knowledge and the stuff, you know, it's a brand new industry, it's a budding industries, you know, so what, when when people are not familiar with everything, just a state, and exactly what what the earning potential is, and just not familiar with the industry at all, everybody's green, I did it again. So there 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

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Natascha Neptune 25:40

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

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Adam Kulbach 26:06

Okay, we already touched on some of this a bit. But what are the biggest challenges facing the industry in the States?

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Natascha Neptune 26:16

Well, my thoughts are a lot of influence by these existing MSOs 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 we're really truly thinking about social equity and its importance, actions speak louder than words. But a lot of these MSOs are saying it, but they're doing other things that, you know, to protect their own interests. Of course, 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 when we think about social equity funding has to be part of that and making sure that social equity applicants will have some some financing options 0% interest loans, that will help them be able to start up their businesses, and, and be successful, and protecting these licenses from these MSOs and other businesses that want to just go ahead and, you know, and buy them. And like I said, I love there's, you know, one state I think is 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 to protect this industry for social equity applicants.

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Mercedes Woods 27:49

I also agree, I think that with the social equity programs, there also needs to be continued training and support for them, as business owners, and in 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 are 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, 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, 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 are 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, practice practices happening and training happening. And I think that any program that's any, any state that's looking to incorporate social equity programs really, really needs to address that issue. And really think about that, 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?

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Natascha Neptune 29:38

I think there's 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 said like, we 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.

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Belicia Royster 30:40

I think there was a point mentioned earlier about just the inadequacies in the scoring, and how you have so many different pools of people just see your point. If you are if you are a trainer, you shouldn't actually as a coach should be in the race with with with your suit. 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 look at 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 as as MSL would. And I think there should be some some different grading scales as it relates to that, as well as fine tuning exactly how we are engaging these third party vendors and scores that are over overseeing this, what kind of knowledge do they have? Here in Illinois, it was a, it was a debacle to the point where they were exposed for having recent college grads, with very little, very little knowledge of cannabis, of the process of the statute. They didn't even know the law. There were there were some of these contracted employees that were even calling in and complaining about not having, being equipped to to great these fill in inadequate. 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 your you don't even have the capacity to fully to fully vet out these applications properly. That's the issue. I can't stress enough how important resources are and like and like Mercedes was saying just not at the beginning. But throughout, as laws change as things change. We don't people that don't have lobbyists on staff, to know that this is being heard today are particular laws being amended. These are things that of course, you know, as you learn, you know, you should do your due diligence, of course, you take that on. But another larger corporation is more equipped to have that service and those 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 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, by way of loan no interest loans or grants, if you will, I think that that's really, really important. And just 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 in any takeaways from what what can be changed. The predatory practices are just is massive. And so when you think about people that have the resources that literally are scoping the country as these last flip, and they're going to these countries and these communities all across the country, 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.

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Adam Kulbach 34:19

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

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Natascha Neptune 34:28

Well, I think there's a huge opportunity in the hemp space. 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. As we take a look at home delivery, I think those are also some opportunities for 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, 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 will really allow you to kind of, you know, get yourself, you know, press forward, as you know, the states flush out policies and execution. And, you know, and to see, you know, what, how, and we can move forward.

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Belicia Royster 36:01

I think I think people don't realize that the opportunities are limitless. I mean, ultimately, this is a brand new industry that intersects with so many other industries. So like myself, for instance, I am a risk manager. Insurance intersects with cannabis. Attorneys intersect with cannabis, as you can see accountants, I mean, people that are making packaging, people that are chefs 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, I don't know, a wholesaler, 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 supplies the picks and the shovels. And so when you think about that concept, and you think about all the inter workings of a new industry and how they need carpentry, they need contractors, they need every working part of what a regular industry with me, then you can see that your your, your discipline that you're already in for 20 years, may be quite lucrative as well in this industry. So I think that I encourage most people to take a holistic approach and looking at the value that they currently have in the skill sets that they currently have, and how they can plug into the industry in whatever way that is.

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Mercedes Woods 37:19

I think both of you make really great points about that. And after the Illinois debacle that actually sprung hmic 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 Plan B's and C's? Should we go to, you know, a state that has, you know, a more open application process. So what does Oklahoma look like to you? How do you feel about that? You know, hemp is another great option. And then I think that, you know, just just like Felicia was saying ancillary businesses are, are, are just as important. And thinking of all of those options, I think, are, are really important to the process as well. You know, if the states aren't going to do what they need to do, and some of them are 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 opening your doors in a dispensary, and maybe, you know, you find a niche that you you're more passionate about even or have more knowledge basin or you know, really know how to make work for you. And I think that's really important when you're talking with people is to offer them all the options. And you don't just have to how to grill or run a dispensary. I think there's so much more out there in this industry than just that.

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Adam Kulbach 39:00

Okay, I think we covered a lot of ground so far. Before we wind up. Does anybody have any final thoughts?

N

Natascha Neptune 39:08

Well, I want to 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 is whether or not we do have the will to do what's right. And in 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 [WWE dot equity and power.org](http://WWE dot equity and power.org) and like I said, We want you to join us. This is our trade associations, not just about plant touching businesses. This is an inclusive industry. I mean, we want to connect with our plumbers, our carpenters, our, you know, architects. And this is about bringing these businesses together to really 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, you know, 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. I will share we'll share our email information with you all and definitely feel free to reach out to us.

E

Emily Seelman 40:45

Yeah, thank you, Adam, obviously, another great podcast, I really appreciate it. 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 and their programs. 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 if 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. Now that was a line that I learned from my mentor Jason Cisneros, he he taught my business, my company, that model, 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.

B

Belicia Royster 42:04

I love it. I think that that should close it out, actually. I mean, and that's that's it, 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 if I can leave the world with any more, I would just say plug in. 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 every few generations where a brand new industry with the capability of making millions and billions of dollars in revenue and changing communities, your community and communities across the country or the world if you if you will, in your lifetime. And everybody can get a piece of this and have a part of it. If we all plug in and making sure that social equity and equitable opportunities are at the helm of this industry. We can all we can all fight the good fight and really play a role in it. Well, thank

A

Adam Kulbach 43:03

you ladies, I think we 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.

N

Natascha Neptune 43:12

Thank you. Thanks. Thanks.

A

Adam Kulbach 43:20



#### ADMINISTRATIVE NOTES

For more information about the social equity Empowerment Network. Otherwise known as seen, check out [www equity Empower dot o RG](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. 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 844 High yield. That's 844 HSI y i e, LD or visit our website at [higher yields consulting.com](http://higher yields consulting.com). Thanks, have a great day and we'll talk to you soon