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Connecticut's Social Equity Council Marks a Year of Impact

Inaugural Meeting Highlights New Data and Entrepreneurs Turning Challenges Into Opportunity

Glastonbury, Conn.– Nov. 5, 2025 – The Connecticut Social Equity Council (the Council) will hold its inaugural annual meeting on Thursday, Nov. 6, 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Symmetry Building in Glastonbury. The meeting will reinforce the Council's commitment to creating growth, unlocking opportunity, and driving success for Connecticut's entrepreneurs and communities that have been historically excluded.

The Council's 2025 Annual Report includes the first statewide summary of measurable community benefits generated through Connecticut's social equity cannabis program. Participating establishments have donated more than \$140,000 to nonprofits, contributed over 600 volunteer hours, and provided more than 8,500 items such as meals and household goods to communities most impacted by the war on drugs.

Beyond the numbers, the Council's work is best reflected in the people and partnerships it supports. These are entrepreneurs who are building businesses, creating jobs, and reinvesting in their communities.

One of those stories belongs to Kennard Ray, a Hartford native who was formerly incarcerated and turned his life experience into leadership in Connecticut's cannabis industry. Ray partnered with longtime friend and Fine Fettle COO Ben Zachs, to open one of the state's first social equity joint-venture dispensaries in Manchester.

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“The passage of adult-use cannabis gave us a pathway to legitimize something that was always real to me and a chance to free people who have been behind bars or had their records impacted for the rest of their lives,” said Ray.

Another example is Arthur Linares, co-founder of Rodeo Cannabis Company, whose business has helped open doors for others through Connecticut’s social equity program. By partnering with Social Equity Entrepreneurs, Linares is demonstrating how established business leaders can turn opportunity into shared ownership and lasting impact.

“What’s so inspirational about this program is that it creates opportunities that can change lives,” said Linares. “Through the social equity program, our partner will become an owner in our new dispensary, and that’s life-changing. It’s exciting to see Connecticut open doors for people who have worked hard and deserve a chance to build something of their own.”

These stories show how social equity in Connecticut is evolving from concept to action, and how entrepreneurs are helping define what equity looks like in practice by writing a new story of shared prosperity for every community.

The Council will also reaffirm its commitment to the Reimagine & Revitalize (R²) Community Reinvestment Program, a three-year, \$36 million initiative supporting equitable economic growth in ten priority regions across the state. The program aligns funding with measurable community outcomes and economic development, reentry, and youth initiatives.

“This meeting represents more than a milestone; it’s a moment to reflect on how far we’ve come and who we’re doing this work for,” said McGee. “The stories of entrepreneurs like Kennard and Arthur remind us that equity is not abstract. It’s people building legacies, families gaining stability, and communities shaping their own futures. Together, we are writing a new story for Connecticut, one defined by access, accountability, and shared prosperity.”

The meeting will bring together certified social equity business owners, community partners, and state and local leaders to celebrate the Council’s progress and set the stage for what comes next, including scaling support, deepening community investment, and expanding entrepreneur pathways across sectors, including the adult-use industry.

About the CT Social Equity Council:

The Social Equity Council was established to ensure that Connecticut’s cannabis industry and economic development efforts provide real access and lasting investment for communities disproportionately harmed by cannabis criminalization. Through strategic funding, partnerships, and accountability, the Council is creating pathways to

prosperity for individuals and neighborhoods long excluded from opportunity. For more information, including highlights of the strategic plan, visit:

<https://portal.ct.gov/social-equity-council>



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