



## CONNECTICUT SOCIAL EQUITY COUNCIL

### The 2025 Council Market Outlook Working Group

#### Youth Champions Subcommittee Phase 2 – Second Working Session

Wednesday, May 13, 2026, at 4:30 pm

Join us virtually on Zoom

#### Zoom Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88002673641?pwd=EZuZ8gs0K5SCdpGkiMuf35llbzwXK5.1>

#### Youth Subcommittee Chairs:

**Eddie Brown – Hartford Communities That Care, Inc.**

**John Torres and Angel Bruno – Bridgeport Caribe Youth Leaders**

**Council Membership:** Andréa Comer (Chair), Kyle Abercrombie, Fanita Borges, Tina Beamon, Corrie Betts, Greg Davis, Avery Gaddis, Andréa Hawkins, Michael Jefferson, Daniel Karpowitz, Melvin Medina, Ojala Naeem, Edwin Shirley, Shirley Skyers-Thomas, Kelli-Marie Vallieres, Charles Venator, and Kevin Walton.

**CT Social Equity Council Staff:** Brandon L. McGee, Jr. (Chief Executive Officer), Tiffany Araujo, Georgette Cicero, Douglas Clemons, Jessie Coleman, Mariedy Collazo Cruz, Kristina Diamond, Jennifer Edwards, Vera Lembrick, Jennifer Stevens, and Caesar Valentin.

*The SEC Mission is to **promote equitable economic prosperity** by supporting **Social Equity Entrepreneurs** and reinvesting in communities **most impacted** by the war on drugs.*

#### Notes:

The discussion focused on developing workforce and economic opportunities for youth through both cannabis-related and ancillary career pathways. Participants emphasized creating structured workforce development pipelines that provide young people with exposure to career options through internships, certification programs, mentorships, stipends, and hands-on training experiences. The group highlighted the importance of tailoring opportunities by age group, incorporating technology, digital media, healthcare, compliance, agriculture, and other transferable skill sectors to ensure youth can access sustainable career pathways beyond the cannabis industry alone.

A major theme of the conversation centered on the need for partnerships between community organizations, educational institutions, health systems, municipalities, and workforce agencies. Participants discussed leveraging existing programs through community colleges, healthcare partnerships, and youth development organizations to create flexible and responsive opportunities for young people. Several members stressed the value of cross-sector collaboration, youth-focused informational campaigns, and coordinated support systems that connect employment, mentorship, education, diversion programs, and long-term career development.

The group also acknowledged ongoing challenges within the cannabis industry, including regulatory barriers, access to capital, zoning restrictions, and limited market growth. As a result, participants emphasized focusing on transferable skills and ancillary industries that allow youth to build careers in areas such as compliance, laboratory sciences, healthcare, construction, technology, and entrepreneurship. Overall, the discussion reinforced the importance of creating equitable, practical, and scalable pathways that support youth development, employment readiness, and long-term economic mobility.

