

Applicants Express Continued Frustration Over Delayed Issuance of Illinois Social Equity Adult Use Cannabis Licenses

Illinois Governor JB Pritzker Asked to Intervene in the Full Release of Social Equity Adult Use Cannabis Licenses

PHOENIX, ARIZONA, USA, December 13, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Illinois business owners have

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“The time has come for Governor Pritzker to ...direct the release of all social equity licenses to realize his vision “towards helping Illinoisians achieve equity, opportunity and justice”.”

Dr. Debra Gavin-Ware

expressed their objection to the continued delays in issuance of social equity cannabis licenses. Dr. Debra Gavin-Ware, EdD, a lifelong Illinoisian outlined those grievances and frustrations in an open letter recently sent to Illinois Governor, JB Pritzker. The social equity cannabis program was initially [announced](#) as part of Governor Pritzker’s campaign. The program was enthusiastically supported by Black and Brown Illinoisians, as an aggressive effort to address the egregiously harmful impact of the failed war on drugs, especially in their disproportionately impacted communities. Dr. Gavin-Ware grew up in those

communities and knows the adverse impact it had on her community.

However, almost five years after the Governor’s initial announcement, progress has been slow, and the program has been mired in [obstacles and continued delays](#). While licenses were issued to some social equity applicants after lotteries and corrective lotteries that were held subject to initial litigation, only 2 social equity license holders have opened to date, with the support of mainstream investment.

The program launched in 2019, with licenses expected to have been issued within a few months. After continued delays caused by the pandemic and the [ineptitude of KPMG](#), the firm charged with overseeing the program and repeated litigation, social equity applicants have expended tens of thousands of dollars that have been wasted. Moreover, the “random selection process” administered by the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Responsibility was mired in allegations of improprieties. Dr. Gavin-Ware’s concerns are supported by pleadings filed in IL. Circuit Court Case #: 21 CH 373. A complaint in that matter stated, “Once the lotteries were held and winners were announced, the Department then wanted the public to believe that politically connected individuals, including, but not limited to a former city aldermen, the former director

of a state-mandated cannabis agency, wealthy suburbanites who allegedly hired and retained social equity applicants to qualify under the employment criteria, a gambling czar, and numerous majority owned out of state multi-state operators (MSO's) with no ties to the state, but who used social equity "strawmen" to qualify for the licenses under pre-arranged agreements that were a violation of the rules, were "randomly" awarded licenses in the initial lotteries".

Dr. Gavin-Ware expounded on those frustrations enumerated in her open letter to Governor Pritzker. "We cannot believe that this program is what the governor envisioned when he announced his commitment to social equity. We implore him to intervene and direct the state's legal team to support the release of all licenses to the social equity applicants who have pursued their administrative and legal claims. He also needs to intervene and direct the DCEO to release the funds to social equity license holders without further delay or arbitrary bureaucracy. The state has unlimited resources, so for it to continue to object to the release of licenses to genuine social equity applicants who have limited financial resources is unconscionable".

The global cannabis industry has evolved over the years, thanks to legal backing as well as the emergence of businesses and product manufacturers. The Illinois social equity program has been repeatedly promoted by the political class as the "gold standard" of social equity programs. However, the system has encountered nothing but repeated delays and unconscionable litigation geared towards those persons least able to absorb the expense. It is even more worrisome that authorities have seemed to turned deaf ears to the plight of these businesses.

It is Dr. Gavin-Ware's hope that the letter will spur the governor to intervene in the existing lawsuits that involve issues from applications that were submitted in January 2020 and direct his law department to support the release of the remaining licenses and dismissals of any pending lawsuits. Those dismissals will then pave the way for subsequent applications to be submitted and for the program to move forward. Lessons will hopefully have been learned that will ensure that subsequent applicants will not experience a repeat of what has transpired to date.

Dr. Gavin-Ware concluded, "The time has come for Governor Pritzker to intervene and do his part to ensure that the social equity program has an opportunity to flourish and to realize the vision, in his words, "towards helping Illinoisians achieve equity, opportunity and justice"

Dr. Debra Gavin-Ware

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