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March 24, 2020

SENT VIA E-MAIL

Portland City Council  
1221 SW 4th Avenue Room 340  
Portland, OR 97204

Mayor Ted Wheeler  
[mayorwheeler@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:mayorwheeler@portlandoregon.gov)  
Commissioner Chloe Eudaly  
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RE: Support for our local small cannabis businesses and community organizations

Dear Mayor Wheeler and Portland City Commissioners,

We are writing today to express our support for the actions taken by City Council and by Governor Brown to ensure people have safe and stable access to medicinal and recreational cannabis during the COVID-19 crisis. We now request that Council work to ensure the economic viability of our City's cannabis businesses and also the community organizations that serve our communities that will be hardest hit by this public health crisis.

As current members of the City of Portland's Cannabis Policy Oversight Team (CPOT), we have invested countless hours in engaging and advising on cannabis policy in service of all Portlanders. Our [2019 Cannabis Policy Report](#) outlined our priorities and recommendations around restorative justice and industry sustainability (economic, social, and environmental). We are very supportive of your work and implementation of common-sense social distancing in Portland to prevent the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19).

COVID-19 presents a unique and dire threat to the health and wellness of Portlanders, and also to our emerging cannabis industry. Cannabis businesses are already financially stressed and do not have access to the same level of social and economic support available to other small businesses. Oregon's creation of a legal marketplace does not eliminate the barriers established by the product's prohibitive federal

status. Emergency funds and small business support (that may or may not come from the federal government) will be unavailable to cannabis businesses, as they are backed by the U.S. Government and Small Business Administration.

Without policy action and direct economic support from the City and State, many of Portland's smaller, locally owned stores may be forced to shut down or close permanently.

Additionally, it has come to our attention that many of the community organizations that create the backbone of restorative justice in our community are currently struggling to deliver services and may be forced to suspend activities and lay off staff. These organizations and the individuals they serve are fighting to repair damage from generations of unfair policies and laws. Many participants served by our grant-funded programs report that they are struggling to stay afloat. Loss of jobs, school closures, the rapid pivot to a tech-required and internet-intensive way of life, will deepen inequity in our City. These organizations and individuals will face the greatest challenges to surviving, rebuilding, and resilience as a result of the policies enacted during COVID-19.

The same level of strategy, intentionality and commitment must be applied to Portland's approach to supporting the survival of these businesses and organizations. Our City's cannabis businesses have become active and engaged members of our neighborhoods and communities, as well as valuable contributors to economic growth and development in Portland.

We urge Portland City Council to consider the following actions when making decisions about how to respond to the crisis in Portland, and in conversations with our State leaders.

**Actions Portland must take now:**

- **Explore and enact additional emergency policies at the City and State level that will allow for cannabis retailers to safely serve clients throughout "shelter-in-place" restrictions and remain viable beyond the end of the COVID-19 crisis (e.g. stay commercial evictions, emergency grants for cannabis businesses for general operations, technical support for businesses).**
- **Ensure that cannabis businesses are able to qualify for relief aid so that they have the resources to take care of their employees and customers by doing things like providing sick time and paid sick leave.**
- **Re-direct cannabis tax revenue towards relief and emergency funds for MWESB businesses and community organizations whose work is aligned with the restorative justice intent of the local cannabis tax.**
- **Support temporary policy changes that will allow all community-based organizations that are City grant recipients, currently and in FY 20-21 (including 2019 and 2020 Cannabis Social Equity Grant and Prosper Portland Economic Justice Grant awardees), to utilize up to 100% of grant funds towards general operating expenses or emergency programs if needed.**

Should Council want to discuss the contents of this letter further, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

The Cannabis Policy Oversight Team (CPOT) for the Cannabis Program, City of Portland

Al Ochoa (Chair)  
Stephanie Neil (Vice-Chair)  
John Monteleone III (Vice-Chair)  
Dr. Rachel Knox  
Dr. Nicole Bowles  
Madeline Martinez  
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[Link to full CPOT roster](#)

Cc:

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