Illinois Puts Equity Upfront in Cannabis Bill

In June, Illinois became the 11th state to legalize recreational marijuana — and the first to do so through its state legislature. The bill also contains some first-of-its-kind equity measures.

According to the American Civil Liberties Union, while white people use cannabis at about the same rate as black people, they are four times less likely to be arrested for possession. In Illinois alone, black people account for only 15 percent of the population but almost 60 percent of the state's possession arrests.

The Cannabis Regulation and Taxation Act aims to correct these discriminatory drug policies. When it goes into effect on January 1, 2020, around 770,000 people with possession records will be eligible for clemency. Charges involving less than 30 grams of marijuana will be automatically expunged, while those convicted of having up to 500 grams must petition the court.

A social equity program will also provide financial resources to prospective business owners "most directly and adversely impacted by the enforcement of cannabis-related laws." Social equity applicants will be supported by low-interest loans, grants, and technical assistance from the Cannabis Business Development Fund, which began with $12 million on July 1.

Meanwhile, the new Restore, Reinvest, and Renew grant program will funnel 25 percent of tax revenue from marijuana sales into communities afflicted by economic disinvestment and violence.

The range of programs is important because no two needs are the same, says Representative Kelly Cassidy, one of the bill's authors. For some, the barrier to participation in the new industry "could be access to capital. For some, it could be that criminal history. For some, it [could] be the need for technical assistance," he says. "We contemplated all of those pieces."

Daniel Cooper, director of research at the Metropolitan Planning Council in Chicago, says he is "very pleased" with the effort. "Thinking from the perspective of an urban planner, we care about neighborhoods. [This bill] means fewer people with a record for those kind of offenses, which means they're more employable, which leads to a virtuous rather than a vicious cycle for our neighborhoods."

Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker also praised the bill's approach. "I'm so proud that our state is leading with equity and justice in its approach to cannabis legalization and its regulatory framework," he tweeted on June 25. "Signing this bill into law won't undo the injustices of the past or make whole the lives that were interrupted. We can't turn back the clock — but we can turn the page."

*—Kelly Wilson*

*Wilson is the digital asset specialist at APA.*

*Published in* Planning *magazine, August/September 2019 issue. Available with member login at https://www.planning.org/planning/2019/aug/news/#3.*

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Script writing, editing and research (see transcript for full episode script): <https://www.planning.org/podcast/comptons-transgender-cultural-district/>

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By his estimation, [Donald Shoup, FAICP](https://www.shoupdogg.com/), thinks about parking more than anybody else. The longtime advocate for progressive parking policy has seen his ideas spread so widely that not only does he have fans, but they even have a nickname for themselves: "Shoupistas."

Don is a Distinguished Research Professor in [the Department of Urban Planning at UCLA](https://luskin.ucla.edu/urban-planning/), author of the seminal [High Cost of Free Parking](https://www.planning.org/books/member/), and editor of the recent [Parking and the City](https://www.planning.org/books/member/). He chats with host Courtney Kashima, AICP, about how he got into the transportation subfield and how, throughout his career, he has tried to further equitable policies and correct market and government failures when it comes to parking. He describes his basic thesis from The High Cost of Free Parking, which is that cities should (1) get rid of all minimum parking requirements, (2) charge demand-based prices for on-street parking, and (3) spend the revenue to pay for public services in the metered neighborhood. He and Courtney discuss those tenets as well as new parking-payment technologies, the growing need to better manage curb space, and even a bit of Roman history, all with Don's trademark passion and humor.

<https://www.planning.org/podcast/people-behind-the-plans-donald-shoup-faicp/>