

ACCD S.25 Testimony

Madam Chair, members of the Government Operations committee, thank you for allowing ACCD time to testify on S.25, which specifically calls on the Agency to administer a social equity loan and grant program. Overall, we are supportive of taking steps to support those who have historically been disproportionately impacted by the cannabis prohibition. However, we have a suggested language change that would help the Agency achieve the goals of this specific program and address the technical and staffing issues faced by ACCD. Others in the Administration, such as the Chief Prevention Officer, will offer feedback on other portions of the bill as drafted.

To frame this, ACCD does not have the technical expertise to underwrite and service loans. Typically, we would work with VEDA to execute a program like this, but they cannot make loans to cannabis-related businesses at this time. We want to suggest the following language that would allow us to contract with an organization capable of providing the financial assistance, loans, grants, and outreach outlined in the bill. We have submitted a suggested revision for the committee's consideration.

We would also like to suggest that the Cannabis Control Board work in consultation with ACCD and the Executive Director of Racial Equity in determining the eligibility requirements for this program.

Thank you for your time today.

S.25

Sec. 12. 7 V.S.A. chapter 39 is added to read:

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§ 988. SOCIAL EQUITY LOANS AND GRANTS

The Agency of Commerce and Community Development shall establish a program using funds from the Cannabis Business Development Fund for the purpose of providing financial assistance, loans, grants, and outreach to social equity applicants. The Agency may procure by contract all or part of the necessary underwriting, execution and administration services required for loans and

grants to be made from the Cannabis Business Development Fund to eligible social equity applicants as allowed under this chapter. Should the Agency be unable to do so, the program shall not move forward until the Legislature appropriates the operational resources necessary for ACCD to make loans and provide financial assistance to social equity applicants.