



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George M. Borrello

Statement by Senator George Borrello on State Plan to Prioritize and Fund Dispensaries for Those with Drug Convictions

GEORGE M. BORRELLO March 10, 2022

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ALBANY – Senator George Borrello offered the following statement in reaction to the news that state officials intend to reserve the first 100 to 200 retail dispensary licenses for people with drug-related convictions and to allocate \$200 million in taxpayer funds to help these licensees launch their businesses.

“From day one, I have expressed concern about New York State’s intention to prioritize recreational marijuana licenses for those with drug-related criminal convictions. Now comes the news that the state will actually be the financial backer for many of these social equity applicants, through a \$200 million fund that will be included in this year’s budget.

“As a business owner who holds a liquor license, I know firsthand that there is a very high standard for applicants that includes an extensive background check of all owners, including investors. Felony convictions are a barrier to entry. That is done to ensure that organized crime is not involved in the business.

“Yet, for marijuana licenses, those with drug convictions are not only going to the front of the line, they are going to receive start-up money, courtesy of state taxpayers. While supporters of the plan argue that this favoritism is reparation for unjust marijuana convictions, the reality is that most of these individuals’ jail time involved the sale and/or possession of harder drugs, in addition to marijuana. The idea that we can turn career criminals into upstanding business people by giving them taxpayer-funded dispensaries in an all-cash industry is utter madness. In the end, New York’s taxpayers will be the collateral damage in this scheme.

“Once again, the only goal of this irresponsibly drafted law was to prove New York State is the most ‘progressive.’ And, once again, clear-thinking, law-abiding New Yorkers are left scratching their heads at the ‘logic’ of their leaders.”

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