



—NEW YORK STATE SENATOR—  
**Jeremy Cooney**

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**SEN. COONEY INTRODUCES NEW BILL TO EXPAND CANNABIS EQUITY  
BENEFITS TO INDIVIDUALS WHO IDENTIFY AS TRANSGENDER & NON-BINARY**

**(ALBANY, NY) - Senator Jeremy Cooney (D-Rochester)** introduced legislation to expand cannabis equity benefits to transgender and non-binary individuals who wish to participate in the new recreational cannabis marketplace.

The recently enacted *Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act* (MRTA) includes a social and economic equity plan that is designed to give business licensing priority to communities disproportionately impacted by the War on Drugs, minority-owned businesses, women-owned businesses, and other marginalized and under-represented groups. Current guidelines unfairly force individuals who have transitioned or non-binary New Yorkers to choose between their identity and the opportunity for equity benefits.

Senate Bill S.7517 will amend the MRTA and expand the social and economic equity plan to include transgender and non-binary individuals, allowing these New Yorkers to qualify for priority licensing.

**Senator Jeremy Cooney:**

“The MRTA was crafted with a focus on equity at all stages of implementation in the new recreational adult-use cannabis market. I am proud to sponsor legislation that will build upon that foundation to include members of the transgender and non-binary communities. No New Yorker should have to choose between their identity and economic opportunity. I look forward to creating a more inclusive new cannabis market for members of the LGBTQ+ community.”

**Amanda Babine, Executive Director, Equality New York:**

“Equality New York was proud to support the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act (MRTA). Since the passage, we have focused on ways we can ensure the rollout of this legislation is truly equitable. We commend Senator Cooney for introducing legislation that will ensure the Transgender, Gender Non-Conforming, & Non-Binary (TGNCNB) community be included in the social and economic equity plan. EQNY was proud to endorse such a strong ally like Senator Cooney.”

**Kevin Berry, President, Greater Rochester LGBTQ+ Political Caucus:**

“This legislation would help to prevent New Yorkers who are transgender or non-binary from being denied this economic opportunity because they live as their authentic selves. In addition, it recognizes that these New Yorkers suffer financially due to social and systemic bias, and that steps must be taken to mitigate that harm. While there is a long way to go, this bill is a well thought step toward equity for persons who are transgender or non-binary. It is critical that lawmakers consider this part of their constituency whenever they create or vote on legislation.”

**Rachel Leavy, Owner, Infused Events Rochester:**

“As an activist in both the cannabis and LGBTQIA+ worlds, I’m thrilled to see legislation intersecting both. If this bill passes, I will have the chance to participate in the cannabis industry and carve out a space for the queer community; providing safe access to cannabis, career opportunities, and continued outreach. This bill is just the start of something much larger to address the long-overdue representation of trans and non-binary folks like myself.”

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*Senate Bill S.7517 can be found here:*

<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/S7517>