



OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Vermont State House
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05602

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
United States Senate
437 Russell Senate Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

June 13, 2022

Dear Senator Leahy:

I am writing on behalf of Vermont business owners and Vermont's newly formed cannabis market. In 2020, Vermont enacted Act 164 which establishes a retail cannabis market in our state. Since that time, Vermont's Cannabis Control Board has promulgated rules, cannabis businesses are preparing applications, and Vermonters across the state are preparing for a cannabis market that is estimated to be worth over \$250 million. I have heard from constituents about needed support from Congress to ensure that this market is stable, equitable, and safe. Specifically, as it relates to banking.

To that end, I'm reaching out to thank you for co-sponsoring S.910, The SAFE Banking Act of 2021. As you know, currently, many state-sanctioned cannabis businesses can't access banking. This raises public safety concerns associated with cash transactions for Vermont businesses. What is more, as Vermont's cannabis market begins, the inability to access banking services makes entry into the market particularly difficult. It also marginalizes BIPOC Vermonters, women, and other groups that have historically not had access to capital.

For these reasons, I urge you to consider supporting language in the Appropriations process that would protect financial institutions that work with cannabis businesses from prosecution.

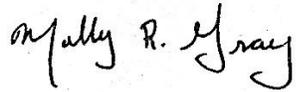
Additionally, I urge you to consider supporting language that would extend protections to Vermont's cannabis establishments, clarifying that taxpayer funds would not be used to prosecute state-sanctioned cannabis businesses. The language would be nearly identical to the language that has long supported protections for medical cannabis establishments. This action is necessary for businesses to operate with peace of mind that the federal government will not interfere with their operations.

For Vermont cannabis businesses, these steps will provide a level of assurance that will allow the orderly transition to a regulated market which protects consumers, grows the revenue of the state

- including millions of dollars for prevention programs - and reduces the harms associated with the criminalization of cannabis.

Thank you for your leadership on S.910 and for your consideration of these important protections for Vermont financial institutions and businesses.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Molly R. Gray". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "M" and "G".

Molly Gray

Vermont Lieutenant Governor