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Clarity for a Budding Industry: Connecticut Cannabis Social Equity Council Identifies Disproportionately Impacted Areas

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by Zachary T. Zeid

Earlier this summer, Connecticut became the nineteenth state to legalize the possession and use of cannabis for recreational purposes. As we noted in a prior alert, *Recreational Cannabis in Connecticut: What to Know about Getting into the Business*, one of the most commonly discussed topics surrounding the new law is the decision to include social equity procedures and programs intended to assist communities that have historically been “disproportionately impacted” by drug laws. Disproportionately impacted areas are important under the new law because those who grew up or lived in such areas may qualify as social equity applicants -- and half of all licenses issued under the new law must go to such applicants.

The new law defines a disproportionately impacted area as “a United States census tract in the state that has, as determined by the Social Equity Council...(A) a historical conviction rate for drug-related offenses greater than one-tenth, or (B) an unemployment rate greater than ten per cent...” While many of these terms are further defined in the law, it was still unclear as to which areas would meet this complicated definition.

The Social Equity Council, which has been tasked with the implementation of many of the social equity initiatives has recently provided a list of 215 census tracts identified by the Council, which can be found [here](#). This list includes parts of Bridgeport, Stratford, New Haven, Bloomfield, Manchester, Hartford, East Hartford, New London, Norwich, Stamford, Norwalk, Waterbury, and Meriden, among others.

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The list of disproportionately impacted areas identified by the Social Equity Council represents one of the critical missing puzzle pieces necessary to better understand the licensure regime in what will be a burgeoning industry in Connecticut. Individuals and businesses interested in operating or investing in the cannabis industry should study the available mapping as an early step toward putting together their business plan and approach for obtaining their licenses.

Pullman and Comley has a team of skilled attorneys who can assist with this process, and we offer a full range of legal services that intersect with businesses, industries, and government entities. These include cannabis business formation, licensure, corporate structuring, fund formation, debt and equity financing, tax, real estate acquisitions and leasing, zoning and land use, labor and employment issues, HIPAA and intellectual property protection. Please contact a member of our Cannabis Practice Group with any questions.

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