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businesses  
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# CANNABIS NYC REPORT

## 2022 - 2025

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# Letter From NYC Department of Small Business Services Commissioner Dynishal Gross

Dear New Yorkers,

This is an exciting moment for New York's cannabis industry. With more than 225 licensed stores now open in New York City, the industry has already generated more than **\$688 million in revenue** and more than **\$25 million in city tax revenue** — clear signs of momentum and growth.

At the NYC Department of Small Business Services, we are committed to ensuring that this economic opportunity is accessible to all New Yorkers across all five boroughs. Since the beginning, our focus has been on supporting justice-impacted retail cannabis entrepreneurs through the state's initial Conditional Adult-Use Retail Dispensaries (CAURD) license program. Looking ahead, we are expanding both the breadth and depth of our support to reach small business owners across license types and cannabis-related ancillary industries.

Through the Cannabis NYC Loan Fund, we are extending access to capital for a broader range of entrepreneurs.

We will continue our public education and outreach efforts to increase awareness of the regulated market and the opportunities it provides. I am grateful to the entrepreneurs, workers, and community leaders whose dedication and vision are helping to build this industry from the ground up.

Together, we are shaping a fair, inclusive, and thriving cannabis industry in New York City.

Sincerely,

**Dynishal Gross**

Commissioner

NYC Department of Small Business Services



# Executive Summary

Since its launch in 2022, Cannabis NYC has been at the forefront of developing a sustainable, equitable, and thriving cannabis industry in New York City. Through interagency and community collaboration, Cannabis NYC supports the creation of successful small businesses, good jobs, and economic opportunity to address historic harms of cannabis prohibition.

This report outlines Cannabis NYC's key programmatic elements as well as major milestones, including:

- Launching tailored training programs and personalized business consulting for more than 665 entrepreneurs through FastTrac® for Cannabis Entrepreneurs and Cannabis Account Managers
- Building out a collaborative framework for regulatory education and feedback from more than 1,000 community members
- Facilitated access to capital through the Cannabis NYC Loan Fund, deploying \$1 million to help justice-impacted entrepreneurs launch and grow their businesses
- Curating a real estate assistance network that has identified thousands of viable retail locations
- Hosting citywide education and outreach events such as Lift Off! and reaching over 10,000 residents
- More than 6,500 New Yorkers receiving education through The Plug Newsletter about cannabis facts and opportunities
- Connecting justice-impacted individuals to workforce opportunities in the developing legal industry

With a mission to repair past harms while supporting economic opportunity, Cannabis NYC has become a national model for cannabis equity.

## Introduction

The mission of Cannabis NYC is to create a sustainable, equitable, and thriving cannabis industry.<sup>1</sup> Through business services, strategic outreach, public engagement, and advocacy efforts, Cannabis NYC supports the creation of successful small businesses, good jobs, and sustainable economic opportunity to address historic harms of cannabis prohibition.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> SBS

<sup>2</sup> Website++

The impact of cannabis prohibition in New York City has been disproportionately high on Black and Latinx residents, as well as on residents of several low-income neighborhoods across the city. In 2021, New York State passed the Marijuana Regulation & Taxation Act (MRTA), which legalized the sale and consumption of adult-use cannabis. Recognizing that criminal cannabis convictions often create lifelong consequences for individuals, their families, and their communities, the MRTA set a goal of awarding half of all licenses to social and economic equity (SEE)<sup>3</sup> applicants through the Conditional Adult-use Retail Dispensary Program (CAURD).<sup>4</sup>

In April 2022, as part of “Renew, Rebuild, Reinvent: A Blueprint for New York City’s Economic Recovery,” city government called for a partnership with state and local leaders to build the nation’s most equitable cannabis industry in New York City, proposing an investment of \$4.8 million to support these efforts.<sup>5</sup> These efforts were designed to support New Yorkers interested in benefiting from business opportunities in the emerging licensed market.



*Mayor Eric Adams launching Cannabis NYC in 2022 with former SBS Commissioner Kevin Kim, Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso, NYC Council Member Kevin Riley, and NYC-based cannabis advocates at CUNY Medgar Evers College.*

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<sup>3</sup> The Cannabis Law defines distinct SEE groups, including individuals from communities disproportionately impacted by cannabis prohibition, minority-owned businesses, women-owned businesses, distressed farmers, and service-disabled veterans

<sup>4</sup> April 20, 2022, press release

<sup>5</sup> April 20, 2022, press release

## Program Description

Cannabis NYC supports current and potential cannabis entrepreneurs, the initiative connects New Yorkers to **business training, regulatory guidance, financing support, and location assistance**. The initiative also runs **public education** events to inform New Yorkers of opportunities in the industry. The New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS) provides many of these services to entrepreneurs across all industries and is home to the Cannabis NYC initiative, which builds supplemental, cannabis-specific resources for aspiring and current business owners.

A parallel line of programming focuses on **connecting jobseekers to employment opportunities** in the cannabis industry. Through our partnership with the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice on the CREATE program, justice-impacted individuals receive in-person classroom training, relevant work experience, and internship placement for on-the-job training. In addition to providing these individuals with access to permanent employment, this initiative provides licensed dispensary partners with **qualified, entry-level candidates**.<sup>6</sup>

## Collaboration

Since its inception, Cannabis NYC has centered collaboration at every stage. The Cannabis NYC staff operate through six interagency working groups: Enforcement; Real Estate & Land Use; Health Equity & Wellbeing; Youth Education and Prevention; Public Education, Marketing, & Outreach; and Financing & Business Solutions. These working groups consist of staff from eight city-government agencies and offices: the Departments of City Planning (DCP), Buildings (DOB), Law, Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), the New York Police Department (NYPD), the NYC Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ), and the Mayor's Office of Equity and Racial Justice (MOERJ). Since 2022, Cannabis NYC has connected more than 120 city leaders across our interagency working groups.

In addition to interagency collaboration, Cannabis NYC depends on meaningful partnerships with New York City's cannabis community. The Cannabis NYC 5-Borough Coalition is comprised of community advocates, small business owners, and cannabis entrepreneurs from across all five boroughs. It serves as both an advisory body and a strategic partner in outreach. The Coalition meets every other week to hear updates about Cannabis NYC initiatives and to stay informed about changes in local, state, and federal cannabis policy. These meetings create a consistent feedback loop, allowing members to raise community concerns, share on-the-ground insights, and offer recommendations directly to Cannabis NYC. This input informs the design and implementation of programs and helps ensure Cannabis NYC remains responsive to the evolving needs of those most impacted by cannabis prohibition and legalization.

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<sup>6</sup> Website



*Cannabis NYC 5-Borough Coalition members at the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Juneteenth Block Party, a 2025 Cannabis NYC Lift Off! Tour Stop in East Harlem. Organizations pictured from left to right: Legacy Unites Community (LUC), Social Equity Empowerment Network (SEEN NY), and All That Jive (organizer of Juneteenth Block Party).*

## Major Successes of Cannabis NYC

**More than 6,500** New Yorkers receiving industry and program updates through our newsletter

**13,400 individuals** engaged through Cannabis NYC programs and services

**92 legal and open cannabis dispensaries served**, 88% operated by licensees who are CAURD holders

**205 legal and open cannabis dispensaries reached**, 90% of all open dispensaries in NYC

## Creating and Investing in Cannabis Businesses

### Business Training

Cannabis NYC provides comprehensive support to potential and current cannabis entrepreneurs through two SBS programs customized for the cannabis industry: FastTrac® for Cannabis Entrepreneurs and Cannabis Account Managers located at SBS's NYC Business Solution Centers.

Launched in October 2023,<sup>7</sup> **FastTrac® for Cannabis Entrepreneurs** provides prospective entrepreneurs with the fundamentals of starting, operating, and scaling a cannabis-focused business in New York's emerging industry. This course, offered virtually in 10 sessions over 30

<sup>7</sup> October 23, 2023, press release

hours, helps participants navigate state regulations and requirements and explore different options for becoming licensed.

Guided by experienced facilitators, industry experts, and a network of supportive peers, participants:

- Assess and refine their business model, developing a clear action plan for growth
- Strengthen their market entry strategy and define competitive advantages
- Learn how to leverage technology and tools to boost operational efficiency
- Identify potential sources of funding and sharpen their business pitch

At the end of the course, participants walk away with clear steps to create, fund, and grow their cannabis businesses.<sup>8</sup>



*Cannabis NYC Loan Fund Launch and Info Session, 2024*

**16 cohorts** of the FastTrac® for Cannabis Entrepreneurs course  
**358 graduates**

Cannabis NYC also supports potential and current cannabis entrepreneurs with **Cannabis Account Managers** who are located at NYC Business Solution Centers throughout the city, across all five boroughs. These account managers attend monthly trainings to stay up-to-date on cannabis-specific regulations, business needs, and industry trends. They offer personalized, one-

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<sup>8</sup> Website

to-one support to help entrepreneurs start, operate, and grow their businesses. Services include guidance on compliance, financing, legal matters, hiring, and navigating government, all free of charge.<sup>9</sup> More than 1,950 consultations have been completed at the seven NYC Business Solution Centers, which are located in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Lower Manhattan, Upper Manhattan, Washington Heights, Queens, and Staten Island. Cannabis NYC translated five specific business application materials from the first round of adult-use licensing into Spanish to expand access and close information gaps.



*Pictured: Cannabis Account Managers representing Brooklyn, Staten Island, and Manhattan with the Director of Capital Access at SBS Headquarters, 2024*

Both FastTrac® and Cannabis Account Managers are attuned to the needs of entrepreneurs transitioning from “legacy to legal” status - those with experience in the unlicensed cannabis market who are now seeking to enter the regulated industry.

Over the past four years, we’ve organized “Lunch & Learn” Networking events, virtual regulatory review sessions, and informed community boards on evolving cannabis regulations. Cannabis NYC also offers a Verified Service Record, an official confirmation of an entrepreneur’s engagement with Cannabis NYC programs and services.

***“Cannabis NYC’s support was absolutely instrumental in moving Of The Earth Canna forward. The Verified Service Record they provided wasn’t just helpful — it became an essential component of our PCA package, and the Cannabis Control Board explicitly acknowledged SBS’s support during the public hearing. At every stage, the Cannabis NYC team was there to answer questions, guide us through complex processes, and ensure we had what we needed to succeed. Their partnership has truly made all the difference for our justice-involved, equity-owned small business.”***

— Keston Karter, Of The Earth Canna LLC, a Brooklyn- Based CAURD licensee

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<sup>9</sup> Website

7 NYC Business Solutions Centers providing 1:1 Cannabis business consultations  
1,959 businesses receiving consultations



*Two cannabis entrepreneurs photographed at one of the first NYC-based Cannabis Growers Showcases in 2023*

Cannabis NYC also engages in ongoing community outreach to educate the public about opportunities within the cannabis industry.

In 2023, Cannabis NYC played a key role in bringing **Cannabis Growers Showcases (CGS)** to New York City. The CGS initiative, created by the New York State Office of Cannabis Management (OCM), temporarily allowed conditional licensees to partner on events where they could showcase and sell adult-use cannabis products directly to consumers. This effort supported licensed cannabis farmers and processors during the early stages of the dispensary rollout, when many lacked access to permanent retail locations. Cannabis NYC hosted the city's first Cannabis Growers Showcases, marking the first legal cannabis sales in Brooklyn and Staten Island, and providing legal retail outlets for CAURD licensees and Adult-Use Conditional Cultivators (AUCCs) within city limits. Cannabis NYC also handled municipal approvals for all CGS events in New York City, a required step for obtaining state authorization to host a CGS.

## Regulatory Guidance and Advocacy

Cannabis NYC works to improve the regulatory environment for cannabis entrepreneurs and ensures relevant stakeholders understand regulations impacting the industry.

In 2023 and 2024, the DOB created six guides to assist cannabis dispensaries, cultivators, and processors, by clarifying the NYC Zoning Resolution and Building Code requirements:

1. [Cannabis Business: Adult-Use Retail Dispensary Guide](#)
2. [NYC Guide to Locating Cannabis Businesses in Compliance with the NYC Zoning Resolution](#)
3. [Cannabis Business: Temporary Delivery-Only Locations Guide](#)
4. [Cannabis Business: Cannabis Cultivator](#)
5. [Cannabis Business: Cannabis Processor](#)
6. [Cannabis Business: Microbusiness](#)

The DOB's small business support team also updated its online help to include a cannabis menu option that streamlines and provides tailored assistance to customers. DOB borough offices were also briefed and trained on processing cannabis retail projects.

In preparation for policy reform discussions, Cannabis NYC conducted a 4-part regulatory policy workshop series for internal agency partners on four topics:

1. Cannabis Health Equity – A History of Divestment & Opportunity for Investment
2. Cannabis Science – Foundational Insight into the Plant
3. Cannabinoid Science – Foundational Insight into the Consumer Experience
4. Cannabis Health Equity Movement (CHEM)® Pillars of Health Equity – A Rubric for Public-Private Leadership

On an ongoing basis, every time a new State regulatory review period opens, Cannabis NYC engages with the Cannabis 5-Borough Coalition and city agencies to solicit feedback. Cannabis NYC collects and synthesizes policy feedback for submission to the Office of Cannabis Management. These comments include, among other things, input on enforcement issues, siting regulations, home cultivation of cannabis, public convenience and advantage, and other adult-use regulations.



Co-Founder and Chair of the Association for Cannabis Health Equity and Medicine (ACHEM), presents during Cannabis NYC's four-part Regulatory Policy Workshop Series

*There have been several comments proposed by Cannabis NYC that were subsequently adopted in the Office of Cannabis Management's final regulations. Notably, the inclusion of social and economic equity (SEE) licensees as a factor in Public Convenience and Advantage determinations was codified in subdivision (b) of section 119.4 of the Public Convenience and Advantage regulations, aligning with recommendations made in the city's May 2025 submission.*

*Similarly, Cannabis NYC's November 2024 public comment submission on Packaging, Labeling, Marketing, and Advertising regulations led to the exclusion of glass tips from the net weight calculation for pre-rolls, helping prevent consumer confusion about the actual amount of cannabis flower contained in final products.*



*Tosin Ajayi, Senior Policy and Research Analyst at Cannabis NYC, makes remarks at Cannabis NYC Loan Fund Info Session on key regulatory changes, October 2024*

**12** regulatory policy workshops hosted  
**317** participants attended regulatory policy workshops.<sup>10</sup>  
**8** public comments on behalf of NYC to OCM.

## Financing Support

In 2024, Cannabis NYC and the NYC Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) selected Tuatara Capital, a cannabis-focused private equity firm, to launch the **Cannabis NYC Loan Fund**, offering affordable and flexible financing to licensed cannabis operators. This fund provides capital on affordable and flexible terms, prioritizing businesses that are led by justice-impacted individuals.

**\$2 million** in city capital available for flexible-use loans  
**\$100,000** maximum loan  
**9.5%** fixed interest rate over 36 months

<sup>10</sup> December 12, 2023, press release

**67** applications at launch, representing **28%** of all approved CAURD licensees at that time  
**\$1.3 million** in lending committed  
**10** businesses have received loans, 100% of those loan recipients are justice -impacted businesses



*Bliss & Lex Dispensary Ribbon Cutting Ceremony in Manhattan, a family-owned CAURD licensed dispensary, and the first Black-women owned licensed dispensary on the Upper East Side; March 19, 2024*

## Location Assistance

In 2024, Cannabis NYC introduced **NYC LEASE**, an initiative that connects CAURD licensees seeking viable retail locations with information on thousands of vacant storefronts. Paired with existing SBS services, including the Commercial Lease Assistance program, businesses secure suitable commercial spaces.



*Justice-impacted entrepreneurs learn about navigating commercial real estate compliance at the inaugural NYC LEASE event in 2024*

The program uses multiple city maps and the New York State LOCAL Map to preliminarily vet and curate a list potentially viable real estate options for licensees. The Commercial Lease Assistance program provides free legal services to help cannabis businesses sign a new commercial lease; amend, renew, or terminate an existing commercial lease; and address a commercial lease-related issue. This initiative also hosts monthly networking and education events to better understand the retail landscape and supporting regulations.

As the city passed the one-year mark of Operation Padlock to Protect, the NYPD initiative to close illegal shops, the Adams administration is working with landlords to re-open previously sealed and vacant stores. Cannabis NYC has started receiving a monthly list of these reopening stores and adding them to the list of viable locations, significantly increasing the total amount available for new licensees. Moreover, these are often prime locations as they are already structured and known for cannabis retail. This initiative also supports the transition of storefronts shut down for illegal cannabis activity to legal dispensaries.

**Thousands of potentially viable locations for licensed dispensaries**

**1,600+** illegal stores shut down

**\$115** million in illegal products seized

**8** NYC LEASE events with **more than 570** registrants

## Public Education

Our **Lift Off! Cannabis NYC Listening and Learning Tour** is an ongoing 5-borough listening and learning tour focused on public education and outreach, prioritizing communities disproportionately impacted by previous cannabis laws and policies, with an overall goal of connecting constituents to resources and opportunities in the legal industry.

These events are supported by a variety of community organizations as well as key industry stakeholders, including the NYS Office of Cannabis Management, NYS Department of Labor's Cannabis Workforce Development Initiative, CUNY-Borough of Manhattan Community College, CUNY-Medgar Evers College, and CUNY-Lehman College.



*Cannabis NYC distributes educational materials from NYC agency partners and offers resources for those interested in entering the legal cannabis market at Bedford Club Dispensary, Bed-Stuy's first licensed CAURD dispensary.*

The ACS Office of Child Safety and Injury Prevention (OCSIP) has participated in several outreach events, sharing poisoning prevention information and distributing medication lockboxes to keep cannabis, medicines, and other potential poisons inaccessible to children. This information raises awareness among parents, caregivers, and other trusted adults about (1) the poisoning risks



*Roy Allen, Senior Strategy and Outreach Associate, raising awareness about the regulated industry and connecting with New Yorkers at CUNY Medgar Evers College's Annual Cannabis Education Showcase.*

associated with unintentional consumption of cannabis-infused edible products; 2) symptoms of cannabis intoxication in children; and 3) guidance on how to safely store cannabis out of sight and reach of children. OCSIP also developed a comprehensive cannabis webpage that explains legal adult use and possession, federal law, health effects, safer use, youth issues, and medical cannabis.

As part of the tour, Cannabis NYC also partnered with the **NYC Cannabis Parade**, the city’s longest-running cannabis legalization advocacy effort. In 2022, the city joined the historic parade and rally for the first time, welcoming hundreds of participants and deploying SBS’s “Mobie,” a mobile office offering free business and workforce development resources.

This year, Cannabis NYC held the first ever, flagship **NYC Cannabis Festival and Resource Fair** in Harlem. This free, community-centered event spotlighted cannabis culture, education, and equity through local music, panel discussions, and resources for entrepreneurs, jobseekers, patients, and advocates. It also marked a historic milestone as the first large-scale cannabis festival attended by a sitting mayor, with Mayor Adams joining cannabis community leaders, entertainers, and elected officials in celebration. The festival also included Cannabis NYC’s first-ever Jobs NYC Cannabis Job Fair, connecting attendees with six cannabis employers actively hiring across the industry.



*The Cannabis NYC team tabling at a Cannabis NYC Lift Off Tour Stop during Summer 2025*



*Attendees engage with Cannabis NYC resources at the NYC Cannabis Festival and Resource Fair in Harlem.*



*Panelists discuss Harlem’s Cannabis Legacy & Cultural Renaissance during the NYC Cannabis Festival and Resource Fair. Moderated by Manhattan Deputy Borough President Keisha Sutton-James, the panel featured Greg Gray Sr., Sharron Cannon, Shiest Bubz, Regina Smith, and Charles Johnson Esq. (pictured left to right).*



*Panelists share their experiences navigating New York’s cannabis licensing process during “Licensee Journeys: From Application to Operation” at the NYC Cannabis Festival and Resource Fair. Moderated by Jillian Baldassarre, Cannabis Account Manager at NYC Business Solutions, the panel featured New York City CAURD licensees Vaughn Jefferson, Keston Karter, Jillian Drugutsky, and Alex Norman (pictured left to right).*



*Live music and African drumming performances, featuring a DJ set and rhythms by Baba Mwatu and the Nubian Messengers, energized the NYC Cannabis Festival and Resource Fair.*



*Tosin Ajayi, Senior Policy and Research Analyst at Cannabis NYC, speaks during the “State of the Industry: Licensing & Legalization” panel at the NYC Cannabis Festival and Resource Fair. The discussion, moderated by Maria Leon Reyes, Special Assistant at Cannabis NYC, also featured Felicia Reid, Acting Executive Director of OCM (former), and Toni Smith, New York State Director at the Drug Policy Alliance.*



*Community members connect with OCM and Cannabis NYC's CREATE program teams to explore opportunities in New York's growing cannabis industry at the NYC Cannabis Festival and Resource Fair.*



*The Cannabis NYC team celebrates equity, culture, and community at the NYC Cannabis Festival and Resource Fair in Harlem.*



*Harlem leaders gather following the “Harlem’s Cannabis Legacy & Cultural Renaissance” panel at the NYC Cannabis Festival and Resource Fair. From left to right: Keisha Sutton-James, Greg Gray Sr., Shiest Bubz, Sharron Cannon, Regina Smith, and Charles Johnson Esq.*

**More than 62** Lift Off! Tour Events

**More than 137** tabling events across New York City

**More than 1,500** lockboxes distributed

## Business Case Study: Silk Road NYC

Sohan and Maria Bashar opened the first Bangladeshi-owned cannabis dispensary in New York in Jamaica, Queens, in February 2024. Cannabis NYC supported Silk Road NYC through our networking and educational events for CAURD licensees and regulatory guidance leading up to the store opening.

Cannabis NYC also coordinated and attended Silk Road NYC’s opening ceremony, including providing remarks and tabling the event.

Sohan and Maria Bashar are members of the CNYC 5-Borough Coalition and participate in the Cannabis NYC Regulatory Policy Workshops. Their policy feedback has informed our public comments on state regulations (Parts 128 & 129 on adult-use packaging, labeling, marketing, and advertising).



*Silk Road NYC Dispensary Ribbon Cutting Ceremony in Jamaica, Queens; February 23, 2024*

## Connecting Jobseekers to Career Opportunities

### Secured Employment

In April 2024, Cannabis NYC, in partnership with Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, launched the **Cannabis Reentry Employment Assistance & Training Experience (CREATE)** to establish a pipeline for justice-impacted individuals to access workforce opportunities in the developing legal industry.<sup>11</sup> CREATE is a 6-week, paid training program that identifies individuals who have justice system involvement in the past three years and provides them with opportunities for training and employment within NYC's cannabis market. This program provides participants with in-person classroom training, relevant work experience, and an internship placement within a licensed

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<sup>11</sup> Website

dispensary partner for on-the-job training. CREATE also provides licensed dispensary partners with qualified, entry-level candidates to support day-to-day operations.



*CREATE team at the Cannabis NYC Loan Fund and Info Session, 2024*

**141** trainees have acquired cannabis industry-related skills  
**86** trainees have received internship placements  
**39** participants have obtained secure employment with licensed dispensaries and growers  
**26** agreements with licensed dispensaries & growers to provide jobs

## Conclusion and Next Steps

Cannabis NYC has made significant strides since its inception in 2022. The program has gathered multiple agencies, community partners, business owners, and government officials to provide business training, regulatory guidance and advocacy, financing support, and location assistance. It also led a widespread public education effort to connect New Yorkers to business and workforce opportunities in the cannabis industry.

Cannabis NYC's progress since its launch reflects New York City's commitment to building a fair and inclusive cannabis ecosystem — one that repairs past harms and creates pathways to economic opportunity. As the industry evolves, the city's sustained investment in our programming will ensure the legal market thrives for all New Yorkers.