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With NJDOL Funding, Rowan to Lead Retail Cannabis Worker Training Apprenticeship

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TRENTON – A broad consortium keenly committed to workforce development in New Jersey is developing one of the first pilot apprenticeship programs in the nation dedicated to training workers in the cannabis industry.

Partners in the Cannabis Apprenticeship Training Initiative include the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Rowan University, the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 360, the New Jersey State AFL-CIO, Rowan College of South Jersey, the Gloucester County Workforce Development Board, and Loud Wellness, Inc. of Glassboro.

Through \$325,000 in funding from the NJDOL, the program will develop a cohesive curriculum to provide industry-specific training and highly skilled employees to work in the growing cannabis retail field.

The goal of the program is to educate and train workers to help cannabis businesses in New Jersey thrive and to build pathways for employees, particularly those in marginalized communities, according to a memorandum of understanding between Rowan and the NJDOL, signed last week.

“Through this partnership, we will develop degrees, from pre-apprenticeship through graduate degrees, for citizens who will be poised to make an immediate impact on the cannabis retail industry. We will work with our partners to meet the needs of employers while providing pathways to sustainable employment opportunities,” said Rowan University President Ali A. Houshmand.

While Rowan will coordinate all activities and develop education and training curricula for the retail program, the University also will develop, in concert with Rowan College of South Jersey, subsequent apprenticeships for cultivation, manufacturing and distribution of cannabis.


The curriculum will be imported into the UFCW Learning Management System.


Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development RobertAsaro-Angelo said New Jersey is proud to lead the way in the development of a highly skilled retail cannabis workforce.



"NJDOL is proud to partner with Rowan University and other stakeholders to ensure that the expanding cannabis industry has the skilled workers it needs to grow and thrive, and, significantly, to invest in this equitable education and training program so the cannabis workforce is inclusive and diverse," Asaro-Angelo said.

Among other duties, UFCW Local 360 and the AFL-CIO will provide apprenticeship coordinator services and ongoing program development, participate in apprentice recruitment and retention, and develop employer relationships to create apprenticeship and employment opportunities.

“With both medical and recreational cannabis now legal in our state, organized labor looks forward to partnering with academia, business and government to craft a program to ensure the best trained workforce and quality jobs are the standard in the cannabis industry,” said Charles Wowkanech, president of the New Jersey State AFL-CIO. “New Jersey leads our nation on so many different worker training initiatives and I recognize the efforts of the Murphy administration in doing that yet again in the cannabis industry.”

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By continuing our path to a \$15/hour minimum wage, we are building a stronger and fairer economy that works for every family, beginning with supporting our middle class.

The partnership, added Hugh Giordano, organizer for UFCW Local 360, “will ensure workers in the cannabis industry will get the respect for their work they deserve and set standards for training in the industry.

“Cannabis work is a skilled trade and should be recognized as such,” Giordano added.

Rowan College of South Jersey will oversee enrollment of apprentices, track training, provide recruitment, ensure retention, and provide basic skills training, assessments and industry-recognized credentials for adult learners.

The Gloucester County Workforce Development Board also will provide outreach to targeted populations while also working on recruitment, apprentice onboarding and training.

Loud Wellness, Inc., a cannabis cultivator, will provide hands-on learning and technical instruction for apprentices. The business will hire some of the apprentices, according to MOU. The company is building a cultivation and manufacturing facility in Glassboro.

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