

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Marks Historic Opening Day of Adult-Use Recreational Cannabis Sales in New Jersey

04/21/2022

TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy today marked the historic opening day of adult-use recreational cannabis sales in New Jersey at Zen Leaf in Elizabeth – one of several facilities across the state now selling cannabis to adults 21 years and older. The commencement of the adult-use recreational cannabis market represents another step forward in New Jersey's ongoing efforts to create a new cannabis industry that continues to prioritize medical marijuana patients and advance social justice initiatives.

After careful consideration of necessary regulations for the cannabis industry and thorough review of various applicants, the Cannabis Regulatory Commission (CRC) recently approved seven alternative treatment centers – sites already selling medical marijuana – to begin selling recreational cannabis to the adult-use market. The CRC confirmed these seven treatment centers, which operate 13 facilities in 11 different counties, will be able to meet critical requirements, such as ensuring enough supply for medical marijuana patients and meeting social equity standards.

The overarching goal of these efforts is to make New Jersey's industry able to stand as a model for other states in the nation in ensuring racial, social, and economic equity and justice. Additional applicants are currently under review as the State works to grow the industry to serve as an engine of economic growth, a generator of new, good-paying jobs, and a vehicle for ongoing social equity efforts.

"From day one, my administration has worked with our partners in the Legislature to advance social justice on behalf of the communities disproportionately impacted by marijuana prohibition by working to expunge cannabis-related convictions, decriminalize possession, and establish an equitable cannabis industry," **said Governor Phil Murphy**. "The first sale of legal, adult-use cannabis today marks a historic moment for New Jersey, as we leave behind the indefensible practices that led to the incarceration of countless people of color and embrace the opportunities of a fair, regulated adult-use market. It is a moment that required long hours of work to make sure we got it right the first time, and I am proud of our efforts to get to this point. With today's launch, my administration will continue working to grow a cannabis industry that reflects the diversity of our state, protects access for medical marijuana patients, prioritizes justice, and promotes equal opportunities for communities of color."

"It is an exciting time for New Jersey cannabis enthusiasts. I am proud of the work the New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory Commission has done to lead us to the market opening," **said Cannabis Regulatory Commission Chair Dianna Houenou**. "While today is an important moment for New Jersey, it marks only the beginning of the better and more robust industry that is to come. I am excited for the market we ultimately hope to establish – with successful local businesses that reflect the diversity of our state."

To ensure medical marijuana patients continue to receive the treatment they need, each of the alternative treatment centers approved by the CRC confirmed their ability to continue providing access to existing patients and prioritize their needs through strategies such as patient-specific hours and parking spaces.

Alternative treatment centers approved by the CRC to sell to the adult-use market are also required to meet critical social equity standards, including providing technical information to new cannabis businesses owned by individuals who have lived in economically-disadvantaged areas or have had cannabis-related convictions in the past. The centers will continuously be assessed on hiring and management diversity, support for community programs, and the percentage of minority-owned vendors or suppliers with which they contract. 70% of the sales tax collected on adult use cannabis sales will also go towards communities affected by marijuana-related arrests to further these social justice and equity goals.

"This is a milestone that marks real progress in creating a new cannabis industry that creates jobs, generates economic activity and offers opportunities to the communities that were hurt the most by the failed policy that criminalized marijuana," **said Senate President Nick Scutari, the architect of both the medical marijuana and adult use cannabis laws**. "By replacing the past drug laws with a regulated system for adult use cannabis we are ending an era that wasted criminal justice resources, damaged the economic wellbeing of communities and destroyed lives. I hope to see more progress in the expansion of the cannabis market so that New Jersey continues to be a leader with the most significant social justice reforms of our time."

"Today's launch marks the latest major milestone in what has been a long journey to stand up an adult-use market in New Jersey," **said Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin**. "As these initial retailers begin New Jersey's first recreational sales, I am particularly excited to see the growth trajectory of the industry and what will be achieved for our economy through reinvestments into our communities."

"This historic day represents the culmination of our work to put an end to the cannabis prohibition and bolster New Jersey's economic development with the introduction of the adult-use cannabis market," **said Assemblywoman Annette Quijano**. "I am proud to have sponsored legislation that made today possible."

"New Jersey has entered a new era," **said Assemblyman Reginald Atkins**. "With this industry, there will be job growth, investment opportunities, and increased tax revenues that will propel our State's economy forward."

"Today, only sixteen months after New Jersey's residents voted overwhelmingly to amend our state constitution, approved stores across New Jersey will begin selling cannabis for adult recreational use," **said Sam Ferraino, UFCW Local 360 president**. "Getting to this point has not been easy or smooth, but a determined coalition of stakeholders led by Governor Murphy and Senate President Scutari made sure we never lost momentum, or focus. We have worked to make sure that this industry prioritizes the needs of communities and provide career opportunities for workers in this new industry, which has led to vote after vote in favor of unionizing – including two in just the last week. And we built a process that gives extra consideration to businesses applications submitted by people from economically disadvantaged areas, or with a prior cannabis conviction. That is why I am so grateful to be here today, representing thousands of United Food and Commercial Workers union members, as we enter into this new era."

"We cannot say enough about Governor Murphy's first term agenda of legalizing adult-use cannabis," said New Jersey Cannabis Business Association President Edmund DeVeaux. "He never wavered from the possibility of achieving some measure of social justice and economic parity for those harmed by the failed War on Drugs. Today we celebrate the mutual efforts of government, business, and the advocacy community."

"This is a long-awaited and historic day supported by an overwhelming majority of voters," said Bill Caruso, Chair of Archer Law's Cannabis Group and longtime cannabis activist. "The beginning of safe, regulated access to adult-use cannabis sales will help to create new jobs and economic opportunities here in the Garden State as well as new tax revenue that can be reinvested in communities and restorative justice initiatives. Congrats to Governor Murphy, the Legislature, the CRC, as well as the advocacy community and industry partners for making this day a reality!"

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