



Date: March 15, 2023

Bill number: SB135

Indicate Disposition: Neutral

Name of conferee:

Kansas Black Leadership Council

Chairman Thompson and Members of the Committee,

The Kansas Black Leadership Council (KBLC) is a 501c3 non-profit organization of Black Kansas from across the state. We support and advocate for local, state, and national policies that advance meaningful change for Black or African Americans in Kansas. While also changing historical systems that have traditionally harmed Black Health, Wealth, and Prosperity, allowing Kansans to achieve an equitable future.

KBLC supports the creation and passage of a medical cannabis program. However, we are submitting neutral testimony on SB135 because of the significant work we believe the bill needs to make this program fair and equitable.

History has shown that Black Americans have been arrested, prosecuted, convicted, and incarcerated at a higher rate than any ethnicity in the county for marijuana-related crimes. Some of our members have family members serving time in person in prison for low-level marijuana crimes that will affect our community for generations to come. Unfortunately, nothing in SB135 addresses the criminal justice reform needed to start the process of reversing the multi-generational impact this issue has had on our community.

As the committee continues to work and make decisions on this issue, we ask that you give special consideration to allowing our community and the rest of Kansas access to the medical benefits of medical cannabis but not adding unnecessary hurdles for patients seeking treatment. The excess tax on patients put forward in SB135 will make it harder for the people who need access to this treatment the most to be able to afford it.

We also have some significant concerns around the economic and business development process and ensuring we can be in the best position to access the benefits this new industry will bring to our state. The extremely high licensing fees will price many small business owners and

entrepreneurs out of this process. Additionally, it is entirely unnecessary to prohibit any person convicted of a felony from receiving a business license for 10 years. This is another unnecessary hurdle created to hurt the communities impacted by these issues the most.

The KBLC would ask that as you continue this process, you keep in mind our community and the impact this issue has had on us. Unfortunately, SB135, in its current version, doesn't meet our community needs in the impactful way that it should. We believe that if done correctly, legalizing medical cannabis should be a positive step forward not only for us but for all of Kansas.

Kansas Black Leadership Council