



Chairman Edwards, Vice Chairman LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the Ohio House Finance Committee:

My name is Tom Roberts and I am the President of the Ohio NAACP.

I write today on behalf of the entire Ohio NAACP to strongly support the Social Equity and Jobs Fund and the Social Equity and Jobs Program from the tax distribution calculations that were passed in Issue 2.

Ohio voters spoke in a firm and unmistakable voice to support Issue 2 in its current legislative language form. Currently, 36 percent of the revenue raised from Issue 2 is proposed to go “towards a social equity and jobs program which would give preference to economically or socially disadvantaged applicants in granting licenses, according to the Coalition to Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol.”

Additionally, according to Signal Cleveland, “being designated a disadvantaged applicant hinges on factors ranging from race and gender to being from high-unemployment areas to having prior arrests or convictions for some marijuana or related offenses.”<sup>i</sup>

The Ohio NAACP strongly supports the social equity and jobs program which was contained in Issue 2 and was strongly supported by Ohio voters. **Investment in communities to assist Ohioans which the criminal legal system has disproportionately impacted, would ultimately benefit all Ohioans by strengthening Ohio’s workforce and improving community health.** We need to invest in Ohioans for current and future jobs and Issue 2 creates revenue to assist in that effort.

The Ohio NAACP strongly opposes any reduction, or even worse the elimination, of allocations towards the social equity and jobs fund. Additionally, we oppose any proposal that would allocate revenues towards tax cuts<sup>ii</sup> or jail construction.<sup>iii</sup>

Keeping the social equity and jobs fund revenue allocation in place will strengthen the lives of Ohioans who have been adversely impacted by the criminal legal system. By investing in this jobs program, we can help Ohioans get on their feet, improve their lives, and find success in today’s society, while simultaneously strengthening our workforce.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://signalcleveland.org/ohio-issue-2-election-results/>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://twitter.com/JonHusted/status/1722723230002409735>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://ohiohouse.gov/members/jason-stephens/news/speaker-stephens-issues-statement-on-issue-2-result-117366>