

PUBLIC SAFETY
PLANNING & LAND USE MANAGEMENT

MOTION

Every month in Los Angeles, dozens of young mostly Black and Brown community members are arrested for working at unlicensed cannabis businesses. It does not matter whether or not they knew the establishment was unlicensed.

Municipal Code Section 104.15 makes it unlawful to not only own an unlicensed cannabis business, but also to “participate as an Employee, contractor, agent or volunteer.” It is cruel and unfair to punish workers for the misconduct of their employers.

According to members of the Los Angeles County Public Defender’s Union, the vast majority of those arrested under this code section are under the age of 30, and are people of color. Arrest data from 2023 confirms this: over 60% of the individuals arrested under Municipal Code 104.15 were under the age of 30, and over 80% were either Black or Brown.

The public defenders surveyed also estimated that for every employee that is charged, it takes at least several hours to work the case, adding additional strain on an already overworked system, and costing taxpayers a significant amount every year.

This also does not factor in the financial and emotional cost experienced by the true victims: the young, Black and Brown Angelenos who are being pushed into the criminal justice system and often left with several misdemeanors on their record and months of probation. Furthermore, depending on the circumstances, these charges can have devastating additional consequences, such as loss of housing, inability to find work, and even deportation.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council request the City Attorney to prepare and present an amendment to Municipal Code Section 104.15 that limits criminalization to the owners of unlicensed commercial cannabis activities and unlawful establishments, and removes criminalization of employees, contractors, agents, and volunteers.

PRESENTED BY:



HUGO SOTO-MARTÍNEZ
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PRESENTED BY:



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Councilmember, 1st District

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ORIGINAL

MLH
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