

1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 11:00 a.m.

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: The next case
4 on our calendar is another fact finding hearing.
5 It's Produce, License No. 127844.

6 Mr. Orellana, can you please elevate
7 the rights of the licensee in this case, please?

8 MR. ORELLANA: Sure thing. Ahmed
9 Bush, access elevated. That is all, chair.

10 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right,
11 thank you.

12 Mr. Bush, can you please turn your
13 camera on, please?

14 MR. BUSH: Good morning, this is
15 Ahmed Bush, I've activated my camera.

16 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right,
17 thank you.

18 Good morning, sir. Can you please
19 identify yourself for the record by spelling and
20 stating your name?

21 MR. BUSH: Ahmed Bush, A-H-M-E-D.
22 Last name, Bush, B-U-S-H.

23 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Good morning,
24 sir.

25 MR. BUSH: Good morning.
CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: This if a fact

1 finding hearing. A fact finding hearing is
2 informal. The parties are not sworn in. The
3 board is just trying to gather some information
4 about what we're going to instruct the agency to
5 move towards the issuance of the license that you
6 had requested, that you have applied for. And so
7 the purpose of this hearing is just to get some
8 background information about you.

9 This is the first time that you're
10 appearing before the board and as I stated to the
11 previous licensee, I hope this is the first and
12 the last time that I will see you. And I mean
13 that in all fairness to you because usually when
14 folks appear before the board, it is because they
15 have not complied with one of our rules and
16 regulations. So this is an introduction.

17 So I know that you have had some --
18 it's been a struggle to get to get to where we
19 are today, so just give us some -- just for you,
20 tell me about you, tell me about your business,
21 and just you're introducing yourself to the board
22 and just what is it that you want to tell us
23 about you?

24 MR. BUSH: Yes, thanks for having me,
25 first off, and I also want to just -- we're very
gracious that all were willing to reschedule and

1 get us in today for this. It's very much
2 appreciated.

3 Yes, I'm a local DC guy, was raised
4 in the area and pretty straight forward. I mean
5 we had a similar track to get to this point.
6 We're all pretty familiar with how difficult it
7 can be to lock down a location here in the
8 cannabis industry, medical cannabis industry. So
9 we've had similar struggles trying to find
10 locations and stuff like that and we've had a
11 couple -- we started up our process in probably
12 2023 where we thought we had a location locked
13 down and trying to negotiate deals in this
14 industry, it can be challenging, right?

15 So we eventually were able to lock
16 down a location that was previously being used as
17 a medical cannabis dispensary. It was previously
18 approved and operating and successful. And we
19 chose to go that route and we're happy with our
20 location and looking forward to the potential.

21 Yes, I mean I'd say there isn't a lot
22 that I'm going to be able to relay to you that
23 you probably haven't already heard, right? So
24 yes, we're pretty much --

25 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Bush, the
agency, Licensing might know who you are. But no

1 board member has any information about you, so
2 maybe -- so you can tell us who you are because
3 we don't have any information. The agency might
4 have information, but the board members, we don't
5 know who you are, sir.

6 MR. BUSH: Absolutely, yes. I have
7 historically, as I mentioned, I was raised in the
8 area, lived in DC for I think 20 years now. I'm
9 historically a real estate professional and also
10 in design, real estate design. I've been a
11 cannabis enthusiast for probably 15 years or so.
12 I'm thoroughly familiar with the product and the
13 plant and have been waiting for the opportunity,
14 patiently waiting for the opportunity, to pursue
15 a legitimate path into the industry.

16 We're an operator that has sort of
17 basically kept -- we've been more concerned I
18 think than a lot of the operators and no shame to
19 them. We appreciate everyone that's gotten us to
20 this point, but we've been mostly concerned with
21 trying to do our best to respect the city's sort
22 of evolution to this phase of things. Obviously,
23 there's been a huge Initiative 71 sector and I
24 think that us personally, you know the way things
25 sort of play out, I'm kind of a realist about it.
We're content in how the industry,

1 the local market kind of forced our way to this
2 point, I think creating Initiative 71 to get
3 cannabis and then now we are at the stage where
4 everyone -- a lot of the operators are being
5 awarded medical licenses, legal medical licenses
6 to pursue their dreams and their passions in the
7 industry. And we're the same.

8 So we are not operating in an
9 Initiative 71 gift shop or brick or mortar or
10 anything like that, primarily because we're
11 mostly concerned with keeping it casual, staying
12 out of trouble. We were a part -- we did take
13 part in some of the pop-ups early on. I think
14 that was before -- way before Covid hit. My
15 social equity partner had a little hiccup there,
16 but after that kind of just carried on with our
17 sort of enthusiast approach. We've done some
18 yoga-type stuff and have had people come in, pay
19 for yoga classes and stuff like that and sort of
20 gift cannabis.

21 We've had an art gallery and we've sort of
22 operated that cohesively, but generally speaking,
23 primarily speaking, we have been mostly
24 concerned, and we've operated accordingly with
25 respecting the city's process and that's pretty
much sort of our history. I could go on and

1 answer any specific questions you guys might
2 have, but that's sort of me who I am and yes.

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. So
4 who are the owners and the management team?

5 MR. BUSH: So me, Ahmed Bush and my
6 50 percent social equity partner, Bahar
7 Alagheband. She's actually -- I think there was
8 a miscommunication. She's actually on the
9 webinar now and was expecting to be present
10 visually on the webinar. So I don't know --

11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: What is her
12 name and Mr. Orellana, can you please -- what's
13 her name?

14 MR. BUSH: Her name is Bahar
15 Alagheband.

16 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.

17 MR. BUSH: She's my social equity
18 partner.

19 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: She's here.
20 Ma'am, can you unmute yourself and spell and
21 state your name for the record.

22 MS. ALAGHEBAND: Sure. Bahar
23 Alagheband. B-A-H-A-R. Last name, A-L-A-G-H-E-
24 B-A-N-D, Alagheband.

25 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you. Go
ahead, Mr. Bush, you were talking about who the

1 owners are and the management team.

2 MR. BUSH: Yes, we're both 50 percent
3 owners. Bahar is the social equity partner. Yes,
4 I mean that's who we are.

5 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So what's your
6 last name again, ma'am, please?

7 MS. ALAGHEBAND: Alagheband. Sorry,
8 it's a little complicated.

9 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Sorry, what?

10 MS. ALAGHEBAND: Alagheband.

11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Alagheband.

12 MS. ALAGHEBAND: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Just tell me -
14 - give me some background information about who
15 you are. You don't need to tell why you're a
16 social equity applicant, unless you want to. All
17 right, but I'm just trying to get some background
18 information about who -- tell me about who you
19 are, please.

20 MS. ALAGHEBAND: Sure. I am an
21 immigrant who has grown up in Maryland and DC and
22 Virginia my whole life. I attended university in
23 Washington, DC. I currently live in Washington,
24 DC, work in Washington, DC. I'm also a licensed
25 therapist in Washington, DC right now, so that is
who I am. I don't know if there's anything else

1 you want me to add. Grew up in the area. Have
2 been a long-time fan of living in DC and would
3 like to contribute to it.

4 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.
5 This is your opportunity just to introduce
6 yourself to us and share with us. I have some
7 questions I'm going to ask, but you can share
8 with us whatever information you choose to share
9 with the board.

10 All right, so who is making the legal
11 and management decisions for the business? Since
12 I started off with you, Mr. Bush, I'll continue
13 with you and either person can respond if they so
14 choose.

15 MR. BUSH: Sure. I will be.

16 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So you're
17 saying you, Mr. Bush, is making the legal and
18 management decisions is that what you're saying?

19 MR. BUSH: Yes, sir. Correct.

20 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And what's the
21 relationship between the two of you? You're both
22 50 percent owners and I guess what's the
23 relationship? Are you two related or just
24 business associates?

25 MR. BUSH: We're partners. We've
been partners, I don't know, I think it's been 12

1 years or so. We're business partners. We're
2 romantic partners. Yes. My dearest friend and
3 we've been through a lot together and we are both
4 enthusiasts of cannabis and it was just sort of
5 an organic thing for us to apply together and be
6 a part of something that we were always looking
7 forward to. So it's all sort of an organic
8 culmination of things. I think that's the best
9 way I can put it for now.

10 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So tell us a
11 little bit about the business model.

12 MR. BUSH: Yes. Thanks for asking.
13 I mean we're trying to create something a little
14 more creative and unique. We're really
15 passionate about creating sort of a neighborhood
16 marketplace, really passionate about contributing
17 to the local market and doing something that a
18 lot of people sort of talk about and like to do,
19 but can be -- you've got to have a creative
20 approach and so the name of our business is
21 Produce and we are -- we are looking forward to
22 potentially working towards the idea of
23 neutralizing what it means to consume cannabis
24 and we want to sort of operate under a broader,
25 sort of lifestyle and wellness ecosystem so to
speak, trying to normalize accessibility, as the

1 city evolves the industry, and sort of create
2 this everyday utility type of operation instead
3 of sort of an isolated kind of sort of a -- I
4 don't know how to describe it, but like I think
5 that historically cannabis is sort of a product
6 that you kind of love or hate sometimes I think
7 with a lot of people and we're trying to just get
8 rid of that line.

9 I think that eventually we'll have a
10 lot of retailers, maybe not necessarily in the
11 District, but on a federal level, depending on
12 how the laws evolve. You'll probably be able to
13 purchase cannabis in grocery stores at some point
14 I think. I don't know. But we're just -- we're
15 very sort of bullish and optimistic on the
16 essential for how cannabis will be consumed and
17 purchased and we're just looking forward to how
18 things evolve and looking forward to fulfilling
19 that potential.

20 I don't know if any of you have
21 driven by our location right there at 433
22 Massachusetts Avenue. We've already done a lot
23 to contribute to the neighborhood. We spent
24 about maybe \$6,000 or \$7,000 just on the exterior
25 of our location, completely redid the landscaping
out there. It was weeded. We had a weed that

1 looked like a tree it was so large. We redid
2 both landscape beds, filled them with roses, some
3 Japanese ornamental type plants. I don't know
4 what they're called. There's roses, there's two
5 beds of roses, and then there's about eight
6 planters also with roses and kale, as well.

7 And we put up a new sign. The sign
8 is absolutely stunning. We've had so many good -
9 - just the people walking by have really
10 commented positively and are all responding
11 positively to our presentation and we haven't
12 even opened yet.

13 We've had a local ANC member, the
14 chairman, come by and he lives in the
15 neighborhood, he has just come by while I were
16 out there. We shook hands and spoke and he was
17 really uplifted by the way we're presenting. So
18 I think we're on the right track and we're just
19 really, really -- and I told the inspector when
20 he came by and approved this, that we're just
21 consumed and contributing to our neighborhood, to
22 the local neighborhood, to the local market in
23 every way possible and we've just been waiting
24 for this opportunity. So yes, that's what I have
25 to say about that.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right,

1 what kind of products will you be carrying?

2 MR. BUSH: Traditional products.
3 Flower, cannabis oil, high-end paraphernalia,
4 edibles. Everything that is regulated within the
5 city lines and yes, that's -- obviously, we're
6 thoroughly aware that the products that we
7 dispense can only be purchased within the city
8 lines, right? So yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Do any of you
10 of you have any other interest in the cannabis
11 business within DC?

12 MR. BUSH: No, sir. Absolutely not.

13 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: What about
14 outside of DC?

15 MR. BUSH: No, sir.

16 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: You already
17 answered the question that you are aware that you
18 can only purchase products from a DC-based
19 cultivator or manufacturer, so you are aware of
20 that?

21 MR. BUSH: Yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Have you guys
23 done any of the -- what type of training, if any,
24 have you gotten, have you taken to prepare
25 yourselves if the board was to issue, approve the
license?

1 MR. BUSH: Yes, so we're linking up
2 with a platform by the name of
3 patientfocuscertification.org. We'll be seeking
4 out all of our training through them. We've also
5 got legal counsel on hand. I know you have
6 spoken to John McGowen earlier. We've been in
7 contact with him. So we'll be using primarily
8 those two resources to maintain education,
9 training.

10 We have two store managers that have
11 a lot of years of experience in the industry,
12 managing other stores, locations. So we've got a
13 good starting point. And yes, I think
14 patientfocuscertification.org, I don't know if
15 you guys are familiar with that, but that's we'll
16 be starting. And then obviously, we'll have a
17 number of training sessions with them, a main
18 initial training session with them so everything
19 works well, works out well. So those will
20 basically be our resources.

21 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Does the
22 business currently have any Schedule I substances
23 in its possession either on site or at another
24 location?

25 MR. BUSH: Absolutely not, sir.
CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Does the

1 business have any non-medical cannabis products
2 in its possession, either on site or at another
3 location?

4 MR. BUSH: No, sir.

5 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Does the
6 business understand as owners -- do you
7 understand that the presence or distribution of
8 Schedule I or non-medical cannabis products may
9 lead to the closure of your business or the
10 revocation of your license?

11 MR. BUSH: Absolutely one hundred
12 percent, sir.

13 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So if the
14 board was to instruct the agency to move forward
15 with the issuance of the license, tell me when
16 could you operate? The board is going to make a
17 decision today, so you'll get a decision today,
18 but when would you be, if -- if say for example,
19 the board authorized the agency to move forward
20 with the issuance of the license, so when is it
21 that you would be ready, you believe you'd be
22 ready to be operational.

23 MR. BUSH: I think the safest and
24 most professional answer would be to say that
25 we'd be operational no later than January 1st. I
think our goal is really to be open for

1 Christmas. So I would say around that time. But
2 we've already -- I don't know if you've seen
3 pictures of the space. We've transformed the
4 space. It's been uplifted from what it was
5 before from its previous operations. It looks
6 great inside and out.

7 We're pretty much -- we're ready to
8 go. We've already spent the money we need to get
9 things going. We've been in contact with some of
10 the local cultivators and other dispensary owners
11 to sort of gain awareness. We're ready to go.
12 We're basically just sitting, ready to go.
13 Everything is in place. We intend on moving as
14 quickly as possible and I think the goal would be
15 probably around Christmas.

16 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Let me ask
17 another question. Is this the location there was
18 previously another retailer there?

19 MR. BUSH: Some years ago, yes, sir.

20 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: This is a huge
21 space or is it? Now the reason why the board --
22 I've been chair for ten years, so -- and I'm
23 saying that -- I just want the record to reflect,
24 the board had a scheduled tour of the facility so
25 that's how I've been in that facility. So I
believe I'm actually the only board member,

1 current board member who was able to visit that
2 facility.

3 MR. BUSH: Great.

4 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So did you
5 rent that entire space or a portion of that
6 space?

7 MR. BUSH: A portion of that. We
8 rented out a portion of it. It's just the top
9 two stories that we have. We don't rent the
10 entire building.

11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay.

12 MR. BUSH: Yes, you're right --

13 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I think maybe
14 they had -- I don't remember, but I remember at
15 least that visit years ago, it was huge. But let
16 me ask --

17 MR. BUSH: I was going to say, I mean
18 I personally, I've been in the real estate
19 business for a long time. I wouldn't classify it
20 as a huge space, personally I wouldn't say that.
21 I would say it's a reasonably-size space for a
22 retail operator. We've got employee areas and
23 we've got the main retail and waiting room area,
24 pretty straight forward, so yes. That's how I
25 would sort of describe it, respectfully.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: For your

1 potential customers and I'm saying this for a
2 reason because there's no parking available, so -
3 - yes, there's no parking there. And I say to
4 myself when we visited it, I didn't understand
5 why that retailer moved to that location because
6 there's no parking, so who are your potential
7 customers?

8 MR. BUSH: Well, the local community,
9 obviously. We are a very competitive operator,
10 very creative operator. We also have put in for
11 a delivery endorsement. I should mention to you
12 that the previous operator was thoroughly
13 successful at that location. They were doing
14 hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue per
15 month. So they were very successful and our
16 operation and our level of creativity, what we're
17 looking forward to, our potential I think is
18 respectfully much more competitive than how they
19 were presenting and operating at that location.

20 So you're absolutely right about the
21 parking. That's certainly an obstacle for us,
22 but if you're familiar with that neighborhood,
23 it's surrounded by some of the largest apartment
24 buildings in the city. It's just infinite amount
25 of units surrounding that. You have Georgetown
University down there as well. There's so many

1 residents in that area and it's -- I think it's
2 under supplied. And it's not just in cannabis.
3 I mean that neighborhood is thirsting for so many
4 different operators as it relates to retail.
5 There's so much that we're missing in that area
6 and we're going to be a great example of someone
7 who is willing to, an operator who is willing to
8 serve the public to the extent that they desire.

9 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you.
10 Any questions by any of the board members?

11 Go ahead, Mr. Grant.

12 MEMBER GRANT: Good morning. Not
13 sure if you all listened to the previous hearing,
14 but I'll ask the same question of the two of you.
15 Given your process, I'm sure you've had
16 interactions with ABCA, but I want to check in
17 personally to see one, if there were any
18 outstanding questions that you all may have that
19 have not been answered; and then secondly, just a
20 general description from your perspective of your
21 relationship as it pertains to the engagement
22 with ABCA and this whole process?

23 MR. BUSH: Thanks. I, at this
24 particular point in time, don't have any
25 outstanding specific questions. I'd say that I
want to just -- I don't know if she's listening

1 or you guys speak to her regularly, but Anna Ray
2 has been an excellent resource for us. I've
3 spoken to her on numerous occasions. And she's
4 answered a lot of my questions.

5 I think that when we're all trying to
6 basically create this new sector, there's a lot
7 of uncertainty and I think you guys have done the
8 best you can. We've done the best we can, so at
9 this particular point in time, we don't have any
10 outstanding questions. I think obviously as
11 things materialize, and we move forward,
12 hopefully, things will pop up here and there.

13 I've got Jason Peru as a resource as
14 well. He can be pretty communicative when he's
15 not -- I know he's a very busy guy. But yes, I
16 would say we're good for the time being.

17 MEMBER GRANT: Thank you for that and
18 no further questions.

19 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I thank you,
20 Mr. Grant.

21 Any questions by any of the board
22 members?

23 Well, thank you, Mr. Bush -- I'm
24 sorry, hold on, go ahead, Ms. Quinn.

25 MEMBER QUINN: If I was listening
correctly, I thought I heard earlier some mention

1 of another partner who had some involvement in a
2 cannabis-related business where there may have
3 been a hiccup. Is your partner who is here the
4 person? Can you tell us more about that, what
5 happened?

6 MR. BUSH: Correct, I was
7 referencing. Not another partner, but Bahar
8 Alagheband who is here. She's our social equity
9 partner. All that was documented in our
10 application, but Bahar, feel free -- I mean I
11 think that Mr. Anderson had detailed that she
12 didn't want to go into detail about her previous,
13 you know, situation and she didn't have to. But
14 that is thoroughly documented. There are arrest
15 documents and stuff like that in the application
16 that we presented. So that's all there for you.

17 MEMBER QUINN: Sorry, I didn't
18 realize it was part of this social equity piece.

19 MR. BUSH: Yes, yes, yes. So there
20 are no other partners or anyone involved. That's
21 it. It's just us two. That's all I was
22 referencing.

23 MEMBER QUINN: Okay.

24 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay, I'm
25 going to bring this hearing to closure. Does
either party have any final comments you want to

1 make?

2 MR. BUSH: I just want to thank you
3 once again for fitting us in and rescheduling us
4 and thanks to Jonathan Berman, legal counsel, I
5 was in communication with him. We're just really
6 gracious of that and really appreciate what you
7 guys were willing to do for us and I think we're
8 not the only ones, right? I know the previous
9 operator was gracious as well. So thank you so
10 much for just providing this opportunity for us.
11 We're really excited and we hope everything works
12 out for us. Thank you so much.

13 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: You are very
14 welcome. The board will make a decision today
15 and whatever the decision is, good luck in your
16 future. And whatever decision the board makes
17 today if it's a positive decision, as I've said
18 to previous potential licensees, I hope this is
19 the first and last time the board will have the
20 opportunity to speak to you. Okay?

21 MR. BUSH: Absolutely, absolutely.
22 Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you.
24 Have a great day.

25 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
went off the record at 11:34 a.m.)

1 C E R T I F I C A T E

2 This is to certify that the foregoing transcript
3 was duly recorded and accurately transcribed
4 under my direction; further, that said transcript
5 is a true and accurate record of the proceedings;
6 and that I am neither counsel for, related to,
7 nor employed by any of the parties to this action
8 in which this matter was taken; and further that
9 I am not a relative nor an employee of any of the
10 parties nor counsel employed by the parties, and
11 I am not financially or otherwise interested in
12 the outcome of the action.

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Court Reporter

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\$6,000 11:24	add 9:1	B-A-H-A-R 7:23
\$7,000 11:24	agency 3:4 4:25 5:3 15:14,19	B-A-N-D 7:24
<hr/> 1 <hr/>	ahead 7:25 19:11 20:24	B-U-S-H 2:22
11:00 2:2	Ahmed 2:8,15,21 7:5	background 3:8 8:14,17
11:34 22:25	Alagheband 7:7,15,22,23,24 8:7,10,11,12,20 21:8	Bahar 7:6,14,22 8:3 21:7,10
12 9:25	amount 18:24	basically 5:17 14:20 16:12 20:6
127844 2:5	ANC 12:13	beds 12:2,5
15 5:11	Anderson 2:3,10,16,23,25 4:25 7:3,11,16,19,25 8:5,9,11,13 9:4, 16,20 10:10 12:25 13:9,13,16,22 14:21,25 15:5,13 16:16,20 17:4, 11,13,25 19:9 20:19 21:11,24 22:13,23	Berman 22:4
1st 15:25	Anna 20:1	bit 10:11
<hr/> 2 <hr/>	apartment 18:23	board 3:3,10,14,21 5:1,4 9:9 13:25 15:14,16,19 16:21,24,25 17:1 19:10 20:21 22:14,16,19
20 5:8	appearing 3:10	brick 6:9
2023 4:12	applicant 8:16	bring 21:25
<hr/> 4 <hr/>	application 21:10,15	broader 10:24
433 11:21	applied 3:6	building 17:10
<hr/> 5 <hr/>	apply 10:5	buildings 18:24
50 7:6 8:2 9:22	appreciated 4:2	bullish 11:15
<hr/> 7 <hr/>	approach 6:17 10:20	Bush 2:9,12,14,15,21,22,25 3:24 4:25 5:6 7:5,14,17,25 8:2 9:12,15, 17,19,25 10:12 13:2,12,15,21 14:1,25 15:4,11,23 16:19 17:3,7, 12,17 18:8 19:23 20:23 21:6,19 22:2,21
71 5:23 6:2,9	approve 13:25	business 3:20 9:11,24 10:1,11, 20 13:11 14:22 15:1,6,9 17:19 21:2
<hr/> A <hr/>	approved 4:18 12:20	busy 20:15
A-H-M-E-D 2:21	area 4:4 5:8 9:1 17:23 19:1,5	<hr/> C <hr/>
A-L-A-G-H-E- 7:23	areas 17:22	calendar 2:4
a.m. 2:2 22:25	arrest 21:14	called 12:4
ABCA 19:16,22	art 6:21	camera 2:13,15
above-entitled 22:25	associates 9:24	cannabis 4:8,17 5:11 6:3,20 10:4,23 11:5,13,16 13:3,10 15:1,8 19:2
absolutely 5:6 12:8 13:12 14:25 15:11 18:20 22:21	attended 8:22	cannabis-related 21:2
access 2:9	authorized 15:19	carried 6:16
accessibility 10:25	Avenue 11:22	
	awarded 6:5	
	aware 13:6,17,19	
	awareness 16:11	

carrying 13:1**case** 2:3,7**casual** 6:11**chair** 2:9 16:22**chairman** 12:14**CHAIRPERSON** 2:3,10,16,23,
25 4:25 7:3,11,16,19,25 8:5,9,11,
13 9:4,16,20 10:10 12:25 13:9,13,
16,22 14:21,25 15:5,13 16:16,20
17:4,11,13,25 19:9 20:19 21:24
22:13,23**challenging** 4:14**check** 19:16**choose** 9:8,14**chose** 4:19**Christmas** 16:1,15**city** 11:1 13:5,7 18:24**city's** 5:21 6:25**classes** 6:19**classify** 17:19**closure** 15:9 21:25**cohesively** 6:22**commented** 12:10**comments** 21:25**communication** 22:5**communicative** 20:14**community** 18:8**competitive** 18:9,18**completely** 11:25**complicated** 8:8**complied** 3:15**concerned** 5:17,20 6:11,24**consume** 10:23**consumed** 11:16 12:21**contact** 14:7 16:9**content** 5:25**continue** 9:12**contribute** 9:3 11:23**contributing** 10:16 12:21**Correct** 9:19 21:6**correctly** 20:25**counsel** 14:5 22:4**couple** 4:11**Covid** 6:14**create** 10:13 11:1 20:6**creating** 6:2 10:15**creative** 10:14,19 18:10**creativity** 18:16**culmination** 10:8**cultivator** 13:19**cultivators** 16:10**current** 17:1**customers** 18:1,7

D

day 22:24**DC** 4:3 5:8 8:21,23,24,25 9:2
13:11,14**DC-BASED** 13:18**deals** 4:13**dearest** 10:2**decision** 15:17 22:14,15,16,17**decisions** 9:11,18**delivery** 18:11**depending** 11:11**describe** 11:4 17:25**description** 19:20**design** 5:10**desire** 19:8**detail** 21:12**detailed** 21:11**difficult** 4:6**dispensary** 4:17 16:10**dispense** 13:7**distribution** 15:7**District** 11:11**documented** 21:9,14**documents** 21:15**dollars** 18:14**don't** 7:10**dreams** 6:6**driven** 11:21

E

earlier 14:6 20:25**early** 6:13**ecosystem** 10:25**edibles** 13:4**education** 14:8**elevate** 2:6**elevated** 2:9**employee** 17:22**endorsement** 18:11**engagement** 19:21**enthusiast** 5:11 6:17**enthusiasts** 10:4**entire** 17:5,10**equity** 6:15 7:6,17 8:3,16 21:8,18**essential** 11:16**estate** 5:9,10 17:18**eventually** 4:15 11:9**everyday** 11:2**evolution** 5:22**evolve** 11:12,18**evolves** 11:1**excellent** 20:2**excited** 22:11**expecting** 7:9**experience** 14:11**extent** 19:8**exterior** 11:24

F

facility 16:24,25 17:2
fact 2:4,25 3:1
fairness 3:13
familiar 4:6 5:12 14:15 18:22
fan 9:2
federal 11:11
feel 21:10
filled 12:2
final 21:25
find 4:9
finding 2:4 3:1
fitting 22:3
Flower 13:3
folks 3:14
forced 6:1
forward 4:4,20 10:7,21 11:17,18
 15:14,19 17:24 18:17 20:11
free 21:10
friend 10:2
fulfilling 11:18
future 22:16

G

gain 16:11
gallery 6:21
gather 3:3
general 19:20
generally 6:22
Georgetown 18:25
gift 6:9,20
give 3:19 8:14
goal 15:25 16:14
good 2:14,18,23,25 12:8 14:13
 19:12 20:16 22:15
gracious 3:25 22:6,9

Grant 19:11,12 20:17,20
great 16:6 17:3 19:6 22:24
Grew 9:1
grocery 11:13
grown 8:21
guess 9:22
guy 4:3 20:15
guys 7:1 13:22 14:15 20:1,7 22:7

H

hand 14:5
hands 12:16
happened 21:5
happy 4:19
hate 11:6
heard 4:23 20:25
hearing 2:4 3:1,7 19:13 21:25
hiccup 6:15 21:3
high-end 13:3
historically 5:7,9 11:5
history 6:25
hit 6:14
hold 20:24
hope 3:11 22:11,18
huge 5:23 16:20 17:15,20
hundred 15:11
hundreds 18:14

I

idea 10:22
identify 2:19
immigrant 8:21
industry 4:8,14 5:15,25 6:7 11:1
 14:11
infinite 18:24
informal 3:2

information 3:3,8 5:1,3,4 8:14,
 18 9:8
initial 14:18
Initiative 5:23 6:2,9
inside 16:6
inspector 12:19
instruct 3:4 15:14
intend 16:13
interactions 19:16
interest 13:10
introduce 9:5
introducing 3:21
introduction 3:16
involved 21:20
involvement 21:1
isolated 11:3
issuance 3:5 15:15,20
issue 13:25
I'm 5:12

J

January 15:25
Japanese 12:3
Jason 20:13
John 14:6
Jonathan 22:4

K

kale 12:6
keeping 6:11
kind 5:25 6:1,16 11:3,6 13:1

L

landscape 12:2
landscaping 11:25
large 12:1

largest 18:23**laws** 11:12**lead** 15:9**legal** 6:5 9:10,17 14:5 22:4**legitimate** 5:15**level** 11:11 18:16**license** 2:5 3:5 13:25 15:10,15,
20**licensed** 8:24**licensee** 2:7 3:11**licensees** 22:18**licenses** 6:5**Licensing** 4:25**life** 8:22**lifestyle** 10:25**lines** 13:5,8**linking** 14:1**listened** 19:13**listening** 19:25 20:25**live** 8:23**lived** 5:8**lives** 12:14**living** 9:2**local** 4:3 6:1 10:17 12:13,22
16:10 18:8**location** 4:7,12,16,20 11:21,25
14:24 15:3 16:17 18:5,13,19**locations** 4:10 14:12**lock** 4:7,15**locked** 4:12**long** 17:19**long-time** 9:2**looked** 12:1**lot** 4:21 5:18 6:4 10:3,18 11:7,10,
22 14:11 20:4,6**love** 11:6**luck** 22:15

M

main 14:17 17:23**maintain** 14:8**make** 15:16 22:1,14**makes** 22:16**making** 9:10,17**management** 7:4 8:1 9:11,18**managers** 14:10**managing** 14:12**manufacturer** 13:19**market** 6:1 10:17 12:22**marketplace** 10:16**Maryland** 8:21**Massachusetts** 11:22**materialize** 20:11**matter** 22:25**Mcgowen** 14:6**means** 10:23**medical** 4:8,17 6:5**member** 5:1 12:13 16:25 17:1
19:12 20:17,25 21:17,23**members** 5:4 19:10 20:22**mention** 18:11 20:25**mentioned** 5:7**miscommunication** 7:8**missing** 19:5**model** 10:11**money** 16:8**month** 18:15**morning** 2:14,18,23,25 19:12**mortar** 6:9**move** 3:5 15:14,19 20:11**moved** 18:5**moving** 16:13

N

necessarily 11:10**negotiate** 4:13**neighborhood** 10:15 11:23
12:15,21,22 18:22 19:3**neutralizing** 10:23**non-medical** 15:1,8**normalize** 10:25**number** 14:17**numerous** 20:3

O

obstacle 18:21**occasions** 20:3**oil** 13:3**open** 15:25**opened** 12:12**operate** 10:24 15:16**operated** 6:22,24**operating** 4:18 6:8 18:19**operation** 11:2 18:16**operational** 15:22,25**operations** 16:5**operator** 5:16 17:22 18:9,10,12
19:7 22:9**operators** 5:18 6:4 19:4**opportunity** 5:13,14 9:5 12:24
22:10,20**optimistic** 11:15**Orellana** 2:6,8 7:12**organic** 10:5,7**ornamental** 12:3**outstanding** 19:18,25 20:10**owners** 7:4 8:1,3 9:22 15:6 16:10

P

P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S 2:1
paraphernalia 13:3
parking 18:2,3,6,21
part 6:12,13 10:6 21:18
parties 3:2
partner 6:15 7:6,18 8:3 21:1,3,7,9
partners 9:25 10:1,2 21:20
party 21:25
passionate 10:15,16
passions 6:6
path 5:15
patientfocuscertification.org 14:14
patientfocuscertification.org. 14:3
patiently 5:14
pay 6:18
people 6:18 10:18 11:7 12:9
percent 7:6 8:2 9:22 15:12
person 9:13 21:4
personally 5:24 17:18,20 19:17
perspective 19:20
pertains 19:21
Peru 20:13
phase 5:22
pictures 16:3
piece 21:18
place 16:13
plant 5:13
planters 12:6
plants 12:3
platform 14:2
play 5:25
point 4:5 5:20 6:2 11:13 14:13 19:24 20:9

pop 20:12
pop-ups 6:13
portion 17:5,7,8
positive 22:17
positively 12:10,11
possession 14:23 15:2
potential 4:20 11:19 18:1,6,17 22:18
potentially 10:22
prepare 13:24
presence 15:7
present 7:9
presentation 12:11
presented 21:16
presenting 12:17 18:19
pretty 4:4,6,24 6:25 16:7 17:24 20:14
previous 3:11 16:5 18:12 19:13 21:12 22:8,18
previously 4:16,17 16:18
primarily 6:10,23 14:7
process 4:11 6:25 19:15,22
Produce 2:5 10:21
product 5:12 11:5
products 13:1,2,6,18 15:1,8
professional 5:9 15:24
providing 22:10
public 19:8
purchase 11:13 13:18
purchased 11:17 13:7
purpose 3:7
pursue 5:14 6:6
put 10:9 12:7 18:10

Q

question 13:17 16:17 19:14
questions 7:1 9:7 19:10,18,25 20:4,10,18,21

quickly 16:14
Quinn 20:24,25 21:17,23

R

raised 4:3 5:7
Ray 20:1
ready 15:21,22 16:7,11,12
real 5:9,10 17:18
realist 5:25
realize 21:18
reason 16:21 18:2
reasonably-size 17:21
record 2:19 7:21 16:23 22:25
redid 11:25 12:1
referencing 21:7,22
reflect 16:23
regularly 20:1
regulated 13:4
regulations 3:16
related 9:23
relates 19:4
relationship 9:21,23 19:21
relay 4:22
remember 17:14
rent 17:5,9
rented 17:8
requested 3:6
reschedule 3:25
rescheduling 22:3
residents 19:1
resource 20:2,13
resources 14:8,20
respect 5:21
respectfully 17:25 18:18
respecting 6:25
respond 9:13

responding 12:10
retail 17:22,23 19:4
retailer 16:18 18:5
retailers 11:10
revenue 18:14
revocation 15:10
rid 11:8
rights 2:7
romantic 10:2
room 17:23
roses 12:2,4,5,6
route 4:19
rules 3:15

S

safest 15:23
Schedule 14:22 15:8
scheduled 16:24
sector 5:23 20:6
seeking 14:3
serve 19:8
session 14:18
sessions 14:17
shame 5:18
share 9:6,7,8
shook 12:16
shop 6:9
sign 12:7
similar 4:5,9
sir 2:18,24 5:5 9:19 13:12,15
 14:25 15:4,12 16:19
site 14:23 15:2
sitting 16:12
situation 21:13
social 6:15 7:6,17 8:3,16 21:8,18
sort 5:16,21,25 6:17,19,21,25 7:2
 10:4,7,15,18,24,25 11:1,3,5,15
 16:11 17:25

space 16:3,4,21 17:5,6,20,21
speak 10:25 20:1 22:20
speaking 6:22,23
specific 7:1 19:25
spell 7:20
spelling 2:19
spent 11:23 16:8
spoke 12:16
spoken 14:6 20:3
stage 6:3
started 4:11 9:12
starting 14:13,16
state 7:21
stated 3:10
stating 2:20
staying 6:11
store 14:10
stores 11:13 14:12
stories 17:9
straight 4:4 17:24
struggle 3:18
struggles 4:9
stuff 4:10 6:18,19 21:15
stunning 12:8
substances 14:22
successful 4:18 18:13,15
supplied 19:2
surrounded 18:23
surrounding 18:25
sworn 3:2

T

talk 10:18
talking 7:25
team 7:4 8:1
ten 16:22

therapist 8:25
thing 2:8 10:5
things 5:22,24 10:8 11:18 16:9
 20:11,12
thirsting 19:3
thought 4:12 20:25
thousands 18:14
time 3:9,12 16:1 17:19 19:24
 20:9,16 22:19
today 3:19 4:1 15:17 22:14,17
told 12:19
top 17:8
tour 16:24
track 4:5 12:18
Traditional 13:2
training 13:23 14:4,9,17,18
transformed 16:3
tree 12:1
trouble 6:12
turn 2:12
type 11:2 12:3 13:23

U

uncertainty 20:7
understand 15:6,7 18:4
unique 10:14
units 18:25
university 8:22 18:25
unmute 7:20
uplifted 12:17 16:4
utility 11:2

V

Virginia 8:22
visit 17:1,15
visited 18:4
visually 7:10

W

waiting 5:13,14 12:23 17:23

walking 12:9

Washington 8:23,24,25

webinar 7:9,10

weed 11:25

weeded 11:25

wellness 10:25

work 8:24

working 10:22

works 14:19 22:11

Y

years 5:8,11 10:1 14:11 16:19,22
17:15

yoga 6:19

yoga-type 6:18