

Michael B. Hancock
Mayor



City and County of Denver

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY AND COUNTY BUILDING
DENVER, CO 80202-5390
TELEPHONE: (720) 865-9090 • FAX: (720) 865-8787
TTY/ TTD: (720) 865-9010

April 3, 2019

The Honorable William P. Barr
Attorney General of the United States
United States Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue
NW Washington, D.C. 20515-0001

Attorney General Barr:

The City and County of Denver respectfully requests formal guidance from the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) that would clarify and adjust policies that are negatively impacting the legal immigration status for people who work or have previously worked in Colorado's legal cannabis industry. We strongly believe that such guidance is imperative to ensuring consistent implementation and enforcement of state marijuana laws and regulations in the more than 30 U.S. states that have chosen to fully or partially legalize cannabis.

This week, I met with two legal immigrants – one from Lithuania, another from El Salvador – who have lived here for more than two decades. They have graduated from our schools. They have paid their taxes. They are working to achieve the American dream and complying with the processes in place to become a part of our great society, but were denied naturalization solely because of their cannabis industry employment.

Denver understands the need for federal laws and regulations regarding citizenship and immigration, but we are seeing the heartbreaking effects that those federal laws and regulations are having on our residents. However, under current federal policy, lawful, permanent residents like the Denver residents I have met with are being denied naturalization and may lose their legal status based on their lawful employment in the cannabis industry.

President Trump supported states' rights in a meeting with the National Governor's Association on February 27, 2017, when he declared, "Make states the laboratories of democracy again."

In 2012, Colorado voters participated in such an experiment when 55 percent of the Colorado electorate voted in favor of recreational cannabis legalization. Colorado and Denver listened to the voters, launching the safest and most successfully regulated legal cannabis market in the world on January 1, 2014. It remains that way today.

Denver believes hardworking and law-abiding immigrants should be allowed to participate in the legal cannabis industry without fear that such participation will disqualify them for lawful residency in the United States or prevent the opportunity to obtain permanent citizenship. We respectfully request that the U.S. Department of Justice uphold Colorado's states' rights by respecting our voters and providing guidance to all DOJ employees clearly indicating that legal immigrants shall not be penalized for working

in the legitimate cannabis industry. By providing this guidance, the DOJ has the opportunity to correct this injustice and demonstrate a legitimate and sincere support for states' rights.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. The City and County of Denver stands ready to support your actions to quickly address this important issue.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Hancock", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Michael B. Hancock
Mayor

cc: Senator Cory Gardner
Senator Michael Bennet
Congresswoman Diana DeGette
Congressman Jason Crow
Congressman Ed Perlmutter
Congressman Doug Lamborn
Congressman Ken Buck
Congressman Scott Tipton
Congressman Joe Neguse