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RHODE ISLAND OPENS CANNABIS RETAIL LICENSE APPLICATION PERIOD — SOCIAL EQUITY CERTIFICATION NOW LIVE

Rhode Island's Cannabis Control Commission has officially launched the long-anticipated application period for new adult-use cannabis retail licenses. This marks a major milestone in the state's continued rollout of the legal cannabis market — and a significant opportunity for both established operators and new entrants.

A total of 24 retail licenses will be made available, evenly distributed across six geographic zones. Of those, six licenses are reserved for certified social equity applicants and another six for worker-owned cooperatives, as mandated under the state's Adult Use Cannabis Act. The remaining 12 will be awarded through an open application process.



In tandem with the license application window, the Commission has also opened the Social Equity Applicant Status Certification (SEASC) portal. Applicants seeking one of the six reserved social equity licenses must first complete the certification process by September 29, 2025 and obtain certification in order to apply for a social equity retail license. Importantly, certified social equity applicants will benefit from a waiver of the standard application fee and a tiered license fee structure designed to lower financial barriers to entry.

The retail application process includes both a merit-based screening and a zone-specific lottery for qualified applicants. Finalists must demonstrate site control, local zoning compliance, and a host of operational readiness criteria.

For existing clients and prospective applicants, now is the time to prepare. Social equity applicants should prioritize SEASC certification as soon as possible, while all applicants should begin assembling the documentation and local approvals required for a complete submission.

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If you have questions about eligibility, zoning, site control, or the application process, our firm is here to help guide you through every step. Please contact PLDO partner Benjamin L. Rackliffe at brackliffe@pldolaw.com to learn more.



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