



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES FULL LINEUP AND SCHEDULE FOR CITY'S FIRST-
EVER CANNABIS RESOURCE FAIR**

*Wanda James, the nation's first African American licensed to own a dispensary, to serve as
keynote speaker*

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today announced the full speaker lineup and schedule for the City of Chicago's first-of-its-kind Cannabis Resource Fair to connect residents with employment and business opportunities, expungement and legal aid assistance, and more information on cannabis regulations and laws within the city.

As part of ongoing efforts to ensure Chicago's communities and residents benefit from the recent launch of legalized cannabis, the resource fair will be held for free, on Saturday, Feb. 1 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the UIC Forum, located at 725 W. Roosevelt Rd, to provide all residents an opportunity to connect with cannabis businesses, industry experts, social equity leaders, advocacy groups, government agencies and legal aid organizations. More than 65 cannabis businesses, organizations and non-profits are attending, and of them, 35 are accepting applications and resumes from residents interested in joining the new industry.

"Ensuring this emerging industry brings unprecedented economic and social benefits to our communities has been at the heart of our efforts since day one," said Mayor Lightfoot. "By working hand-in-hand with city and state officials, community advocates, and industry partners and providing residents with the resources they need to succeed, we can empower those interested in becoming the next employee, business owner or investor in Chicago's newest industry."

To kick off the resource fair, Mayor Lightfoot will join a panel discussion with keynote speaker Wanda James, CEO of Simply Pure Dispensary and the nation's first African American licensed to own a dispensary in the United States, and State Representative Kelly Cassidy, a sponsor of the house bill that legalized the sale of adult use cannabis in Illinois. A nationally-renowned pioneer in this new industry, James has devoted her career to expanding wealth and social equity for communities victimized by War on Drug and providing new opportunities for those interested in joining this new and emerging industry.

As part of the day-long resource fair, the City will host six presentations and panel discussions to provide a wide range of information and direct access to experts from the industry. From industry experts and community advocates to City and State partners, the



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panels will feature an array of subjects, including: Know Your Rights, expungement, and starting a business in the industry. The following panels will be featured:

KEYNOTE PANEL DISCUSSION (10:15 AM – 11:00 AM)

Featuring:

- Mayor Lightfoot
- Wanda James, Founder & CEO, Simply Pure Dispensary and State Representative
- Kelly Cassidy, House Sponsor of the Cannabis Regulation & Tax Act

KEYNOTE CANNABIS 101 & KNOW YOUR RIGHTS (11:15AM – 12:15PM)

An explanation of all things pertaining to cannabis legalization, including the current state of the industry, key provisions of legalization, upcoming dates to be aware of, and consumer rights.

Featuring:

- Toi Hutchison, Senior Advisor to the Governor for Cannabis Control
- Richard Wallace, PURE Cannabis Coalition
- Mony Ruiz-Velasco, Executive Director of PASO–West Suburban Action Project

PANEL 2: I WANT TO START A BUSINESS IN THE INDUSTRY (11:15AM – 12:15PM)

Overview of how to start a cannabis business in Illinois, whether it be a dispensary, craft growing operation, or another entity. This panel will discuss the process of starting a cannabis business, including the State's licensure process.

Featuring:

- Alma Tello, Deputy Director for the Office of Minority Economic Empowerment (OMEE) at the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity
- Anton Seals, Founder, OURS LLC
- Jamil Taylor, Director of Operations & Business Development, ViolaKevin Slaughter, partner in the Corporate Practice Group of Levenfeld Pearlstein, LLC
- Jeff Cox, Bureau Chief of Medicinal Plants at the Illinois Department of Agriculture

PANEL 3: EXPUNGEMENT (12:30PM – 1:30PM)

An overview of the expungement provisions of the state law, including automatic expungement and the rap sheet process.

Featuring:

- Sodiqa Williams, Vice President, External Affairs and General Counsel for the Safer Foundation
- Alysia Tate, the Director of Organizational Strategy and Development for Cabrini Green Legal Aid
- Regina Hernandez, a staff attorney with Legal Aid Chicago's (LAC's) Volunteer Services Unit

PANEL 4: CONTRACTING OPPORTUNITIES (12:30PM – 1:30PM)



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From construction to security to HVAC to electricians, this panel will highlight the needs of the cannabis industry and offer you a chance to think about how to increase your customer base in the cannabis industry.

Featuring:

- Pamela Althoff, Executive Director of the Cannabis Business Association of Illinois
- Edie Moore, Executive Director of Chicago NORML
- Paul Chialdikas of Bedford Grow LLC/ Maribis LLC, a Chicago-based cannabis company
- Willie JR Fleming, South and West Side Cannabis Coalition (SWCC)
- John Sullivan, Executive Vice President of Public Affairs at Cresco Labs

PANEL 5: I WANT TO WORK IN THE INDUSTRY (1:45PM – 2:45PM)

An overview of the various paths to work in the industry, in addition to covering available jobs, this session will explain what skills, training and certification are necessary.

Featuring:

- Britteny Soto, senior recruiter for Green Thumb Industries
- Beniamino Capellupo, Executive Director for Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
- Paul Lee, one of the founding owners of Dispensary33
- Shawnee Williams, a recruiter and account executive for Illinois Equity Staffing

PANEL 6: NAVIGATING CITY OF CHICAGO REGULATIONS (1:45PM – 2:45PM)

An overview of all the different city processes you have to understand in order to become a cannabis entrepreneur in the City.

Featuring:

- Paul Stewart, an Assistant Deputy Mayor and the City of Chicago's Cannabis Coordinator
- Katriina McGuire, a Partner at Thompson Coburn
- Steve Valenziano, the Assistant Zoning Administrator for the City of Chicago

Residents and businesses interested in attending the City's upcoming Cannabis Resource Fair can register on EventBrite. This event is free to the public. To learn more about the legalization of cannabis in Chicago, residents can also visit Chicago.gov/cannabis.

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