



Social Equity Applicant Verification

The Cannabis Reform Act establishes an initial business licensing round for eligible social equity applicants. A social equity applicant is an applicant with at least 65% ownership and control held by one or more individuals who meet the statutory definition of social equity applicant (details below). **Only** verified social equity applicants may apply for a standard or micro grower, processor, or dispensary license in the first round. To access the Maryland Cannabis Administration's (MCA) Social Equity Verification Portal and verify eligibility as a social equity applicant, an individual must first demonstrate their interest in, and understanding of, the upcoming licensing process by completing the following form: [Cannabis Business Licensing Interest Form](#).

By verifying an individual's status as a social equity applicant in advance of the licensing round, the MCA aims to further streamline the application process for prospective licensees.

The Cannabis Reform Act defines social equity applicant as meeting **ONE** or more of the following criteria:

1. Have lived in a disproportionately impacted area for at least 5 of the 10 years immediately preceding the submission of the application¹;
2. Attended a public school in a disproportionately impacted area for at least 5 years; or
3. For at least 2 years, attended a 4-year institution of higher education in Maryland where at least 40 percent of the individuals who attend the institution of higher education are eligible for a Pell Grant.

A map of disproportionately impacted areas in Maryland, and a list of qualifying institutions may be found on the Office of Social Equity's website, ose.maryland.gov.

¹ Address documentation supporting a minimum of *five* years will be validated using a combination of two data points per address. Failure to provide the requested documentation may result in the delay of your certification or inability to successfully submit a license application.

Eligibility Criteria

The table below shows documentation that will be accepted by the MCA to verify that an individual meets the above criteria:

<u>Eligibility Criteria</u>	<u>Documents Accepted</u>
<p>(1) Lived in a Disproportionately Impacted Area for 5 of the last ten years immediately preceding the submission of the application.</p>	<p>Any combination of two of the following documents that display the candidate’s residential address for five separate years from calendar 2014 to 2023:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Residential Lease; ● Driver’s License, or other government issued ID containing a valid address; ● Mortgage loan; ● Bank statement; ● Utility bill addressed to the prospective applicant; ● W-2/1099; ● Income tax returns; ● Court documents; ● Credit card statements; or ● Housing Authority Records.
<p>(2) Attended a public school in a disproportionately impacted area for at least 5 years².</p>	<p>Any of the following documents showing enrollment in a public school for five or more years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● School transcripts; or ● Enrollment records. <p>Records must be obtained from a public school, and include the address of the public school³.</p>
<p>(3) For at least two years, attended a 4-year institution of higher education in the State where at least 40 percent of the individuals who attend the institution of higher education are eligible for a Pell Grant.</p>	<p>Two years worth of transcripts or school records from any of the following institutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bowie State University; ● Coppin State University; ● Morgan State University; ● The University of Baltimore; ● University of Maryland - Eastern Shore; or ● Washington Adventist University. <p>Records must be obtained from the institutions above⁴.</p>

² A list of currently operating public schools located in disproportionately impacted areas in Maryland may be found [here](#) on the Office of Social Equity’s website.

³ If unable to produce or identify public school records, individuals are still encouraged to use the State’s 3rd party vendor, as they may be able to verify an individual’s attendance at the particular school without school documentation. You will be asked to submit: School name, location, dates of attendance, major/degree (if applicable), if graduated, date of graduation (if applicable), and name while attending.

Individuals Who Have Not Lived In or Attended a Public School in Maryland In an Identified Disproportionately Impacted Area

If you are seeking social equity status based on living in or attending a public school in a disproportionately impacted area outside of the State of Maryland, you still must use MCA's Social Equity Verification Portal. Additionally, you must provide data that indicates the geographic area in question meets the State's definition of a disproportionately impacted area.

After completing your social equity applicant verification portal, you may receive additional communications from the MCA with the specific data requirements to verify the location as a disproportionately impacted area.

Gaining Access to the Verification Portal

The MCA is working with a third party (Creative Services Inc.) to verify eligibility as a social equity applicant.

Individuals interested in verifying their status as a social equity applicant must complete the [Cannabis Business Licensing Interest Form](#) to receive a personalized link to the portal.

The Social Equity Verification Portal will open on **Friday, September 8, for a period of 60 days, closing on Tuesday, November 7**. Upon successful completion of the form, you will receive a personalized link via email within 1-2 business days. For any interest form completed in advance of September 8th, you will receive a link upon the opening of the portal.

Verified Social Equity Applicants

Once verified, an individual will be granted a social equity applicant verification number and corresponding report that they must submit along with their application.

Verification of one's social equity applicant status does not:

1. Guarantee an individual's admission to the application lottery; or
2. Replace the need for statutory application materials.

The verification of social equity status is a service being provided at no cost to the prospective applicant. A completed report from the State's vendor is a required component of the forthcoming application. This portal will close prior to the beginning of the application being open. Please direct any questions to mca.applications@maryland.gov.