

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES  
COMMISSIONER NICOLE “NIKKI” FRIED

THE CAPITOL

March 29, 2021

Ambassador Catherine M. Russell  
Director, Office of Presidential Personnel  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Ambassador Russell,

I write today to thank you for your efforts in helping the President and Vice President build a strong, competent, inclusive White House workforce that reflects the diversity of America, one of the great strengths of our nation. The talent assembled by the Biden Administration is both exceptional and necessary to address the numerous health, economic, and justice challenges that our country faces.

There are recent concerns regarding Administration policies on the use of marijuana, concerns which I share as an advocate for modernized cannabis policy. Reports have indicated that dozens of current and potential White House staffers have been adversely affected through the personnel process for prior use of marijuana, despite assurances that such use would not be disqualifying for employment.

While the Biden Administration has taken a more responsible approach than previous administrations to prior marijuana usage by White House personnel, we face a pivotal moment in our nation’s relationship with this unfairly-stigmatized substance. Marijuana currently enjoys the approval of nearly seven in ten American adults, with more than half of adults having used cannabis at some point. The majority of states have legalized marijuana in some fashion, and an estimated five million Americans are registered medical marijuana patients at the state level, including more than 500,000 Floridians.

After decades of counterproductive prohibition, the pendulum has swung towards the need for modern, responsible, science-based policies towards cannabis. This includes White House personnel policies that reflect – at a minimum – the right of medical marijuana patients to use the medicine legally prescribed to them under state law by medical professionals, without facing employment discrimination or undue scrutiny in the workplace or hiring process. In Florida, we have unfortunately seen numerous examples of dedicated professionals, from teachers to social workers, who have been unfairly denied, stigmatized in, terminated from, and discredited for employment.

As the President and Vice President know, prejudicial cannabis policies disproportionately and unevenly impact communities of color and socially disadvantaged individuals. The many young leaders in these segments of society who dream of serving our nation in the White House are yet another reason to commit to consistent, equitable personnel policies that meet our modern workforce where it is – without regard to prior or current use of marijuana.


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I join numerous state and federal officials across the country in asking you to review the Administration's current employment policies regarding marijuana, and to enact personnel policies that reflect the modern reality of cannabis in America, including the sweeping state legalization that has preceded the decriminalization to which the President has committed. The challenges of this moment in history require both the best talent of this generation and continued steps towards correcting historic injustice on cannabis.

Sincerely,



Nicole Fried

Florida Commissioner of Agriculture

cc: Dana Remus, White House Counsel  
Kathleen McGettigan, Acting Director, U.S. Office of Personnel Management