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**MAYOR ADAMS, DEPARTMENT OF SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES APPOINT
DASHEEDA DAWSON AS CANNABIS NYC FOUNDING DIRECTOR**

NEW YORK – New York City Mayor Eric Adams and New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS) Commissioner Kevin D. Kim today announced the appointment of Dasheeda Dawson as the founding director of its new [Cannabis NYC](#) initiative to spearhead the agency’s support of the growing cannabis industry. Dawson will lead SBS’s strategy to support New York’s emerging cannabis industry through widespread public education, direct services to cannabis entrepreneurs and professionals, legislative advocacy, and policy development at all levels of government.

“Our administration is committed to planting the seeds for equity in a high-growth, budding industry like cannabis sales,” said **Mayor Eric Adams**. “The nation’s most equitable cannabis industry will be in New York City, and to drive that goal home, we have chosen a proven leader with unmatched experience and credibility in this field. Dasheeda Dawson will fill the needs of entrepreneurs in this space, and as a person with lived experience and who was harmed by the ‘War on Drugs,’ this is personal for her. I look forward to working with her, day after day, to ‘Get Stuff Done’ for New Yorkers and grow this initiative.”

“New York City is committed to building the country’s most equitable cannabis industry,” said **Deputy Mayor for Economic and Workforce Development Maria Torres-Springer**. “By naming an experienced and accomplished industry leader like Dasheeda Dawson as founding director of Cannabis NYC, we are ensuring our economic and social equity goals will be fulfilled as this industry grows across the city.”

“Equity and social justice are the guiding principles of the Adams administration, and that’s why we are so excited to welcome Dasheeda Dawson as our founding director of Cannabis NYC,” said **SBS Commissioner Kevin D. Kim**. “Her professional experience as an educator, regulator, entrepreneur, and advocate make her ready for this moment. Her personal experience — as someone who has been impacted directly by the ‘War on Drugs’ — also uniquely prepare her to lead this groundbreaking initiative. I am confident that with Dasheeda at the helm of Cannabis NYC, we will help countless New Yorkers better understand and fully take advantage of this newfound opportunity.”

“Leading Cannabis NYC is an incredible full circle moment. Growing up in East New York, I survived the height of cannabis prohibition and witnessed targeted enforcement derail the lives

of my friends and family. I was stopped, searched, and treated like a criminal before I ever touched the plant, which shaped my initial perceptions,” says **Dasheeda Dawson, founding director, Cannabis NYC**. “Now, as a cannabis patient, educator, and regulator, I get to support other consumers, small businesses, and local stakeholders in the growing industry so that cannabis — once used to suppress communities like mine — can be tapped as a tool for transformation. I’m thrilled to be back home, helping to craft an equity-centered approach to the city’s cannabis industry framework that welcomes all New Yorkers to the table.”

Dawson will serve as the primary liaison between SBS, other city agencies, the New York State Office of Cannabis Management (NYSOCM), as well as community stakeholders, including elected officials, community boards, and industry associations. She will also work to establish and collaborate with the New York City Cannabis Advisory Council, an advisory board of industry and community stakeholders that aims to ensure innovation and equity are central to the success of this emerging industry.

“Dasheeda understands what it means to run a city cannabis program that centers equity and community reinvestment,” says **Chris Alexander, executive director, NYSOCM**. “Her historic work in Portland investing in entrepreneurs and tirelessly advocating in her home state of New York define her as a national leader in the cannabis space. She has continued to destigmatize cannabis use while promoting its benefits, and I’m confident that she’ll continue to be a powerful ally as we work together to make New York’s cannabis market the most accessible and diverse in the nation.”

About Dasheeda Dawson -- Founding Director of Cannabis NYC

Dasheeda Dawson is a global cannabis advocate, award-winning Fortune 100 business strategist, and a bestselling author on the cannabis industry. Her advocacy and thought leadership have also been featured across multiple outlets.

Dawson has nearly 20 years of business development, strategic management, and brand marketing excellence while leading transformative organizations in both the public and private sectors, nearly a decade of which has focused on the growing cannabis industry.

As an advocate and policy advisor, Dawson was pivotal to the 2021 landmark passage of New York’s Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act. While fighting for legalization in her home state, Dawson was tapped to lead cannabis regulation in Portland, Oregon. As cannabis program manager for the City of Portland, Dawson oversaw all regulatory licensing, compliance, education, and equity initiatives for the city’s cannabis industry. Supported by ongoing cannabis tax revenue allocation, her office managed the Social Equity & Educational Development (SEED) Initiatives, which includes the nationally-modeled SEED Grant Fund, the country’s first community reinvestment fund tied to local cannabis tax revenue. Under her leadership, Portland approved a multimillion-dollar Cannabis Emergency Relief Fund, becoming the first government jurisdiction in the country to allocate cannabis tax revenue to provide aid and emergency relief to the industry.

Dawson serves as Board chair of the Cannabis Regulators of Color Coalition, a national organization of industry policymakers and regulators often referred to as the leading architects of cannabis equity and reform in the United States.

Dawson received her MBA from Rutgers Business School and completed her undergraduate degree in molecular biology at Princeton University.

“New York City has long been a national leader in its strong support for the cannabis industry,” said **U.S. Representative Jerry Nadler**. “Through initiatives such as Cannabis NYC, New York has become a welcomed home for cannabis companies and entrepreneurs alike, who, in turn, have created jobs and helped New York’s economy. While I continue to fight to decriminalize marijuana at the federal level through passage of my legislation, the MORE Act, I commend the city for continuing to support the growth of a strong and robust cannabis industry.”

“This is a pivotal moment in our history to recognize and embrace the growing cannabis industry in New York City and to correct the discriminatory practices that have impacted our communities far too long,” said **U.S. Representative Adriano Espaillat**. “I commend Mayor Adams on the appointment of Dasheeda Dawson as the founding director of the new Cannabis NYC initiative and look forward to supporting the agency’s efforts to ensure opportunities and awareness of the emerging cannabis industry throughout our city.”

“As an advocate and educator, Dasheeda was an instrumental part of the coalition that supported my efforts to pass the MRTA. She is one of the most knowledgeable and accomplished professionals in the space,” says **New York State Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes**. “More importantly, she is passionate about realizing the economic and health benefits of cannabis for communities most harmed by prohibition - a goal we both share. I believe that Dasheeda’s oversight will ensure that cannabis legalization in NYC lives up to the promise of our landmark legislation.”

“Given the recent legalization of marijuana we must, now more than ever, ensure that there is an equitable allocation of resources given to communities that have suffered the most under previously held policies,” said **New York State Assemblymember Yudelka Tapia**. “The mayor chose the right person by hiring Dasheeda Dawson as head of Cannabis NYC. I look forward to working with her to ensure that all stakeholders, especially the most marginalized under the previous marijuana policy, are now able to function and thrive under a more progressive New York City.”

“The growing cannabis industry brings tremendous socioeconomic potential for the five boroughs, and it is critical that we build an industry rooted in fairness that prioritizes communities that have long felt the sting of inequitable marijuana enforcement,” said **Queens Borough President Donovan Richards Jr.** “With the announcement of Dasheeda Dawson as the new director of Cannabis NYC, I’m confident our city will make significant steps toward accomplishing those goals.”

“As we continue to advance our economy, key contributors and veteran cannabis advocates like Ms. Dawson will shape and allow New York City to thrive in its latest economic endeavor,” said **New York City Councilmember Marjorie Velázquez**. “Ms. Dawson’s experience gives her the leverage needed to build a rapport within the city’s multi-agency system and serve as a liaison within the community and NYSOCM. Our city needs individuals like Ms. Dawson to ensure that the cannabis business opportunities are equitable and that there is education about the industry while putting provisions in place that invite innovation and

creativity. Congratulations Ms. Dawson, I look forward to working with you in the coming months."

"New York City was the former marijuana arrests capital in this state and in this country, the promise of reform will be shaped by what happens in New York," says **Kassandra Frederique, executive director, Drug Policy Alliance**. "For this reason and for many others, Dasheeda Dawson is an inspired choice because as a leading member of the statewide coalition to regulate cannabis in New York, she understands the intent, the New York landscape, and is a renowned cannabis expert. She is also a co-founder of the Cannabis Regulators of Color Coalition so not only will New York benefit from her deep expertise but will be able to continue to learn from others across the country."

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