

## **R3 Grants for Communities Harmed by Violence, Excessive Incarceration, & Economic Disinvestment**

*By Illinois Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton*



On February 11, 2019, the Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker signed Executive Order 2019-03 to establish the Justice, Equity, and Opportunity (JEO) Initiative within the Office of the Lieutenant Governor. The JEO Initiative is a first-of-its-kind effort in Illinois. It centralizes the state's justice reform efforts and promotes economic opportunities for communities impacted by a broken criminal justice system.

In June of 2019, Governor Pritzker signed into law legislation that legalized the purchase and use of cannabis for adults 21 and older. Built into the cannabis legalization is a program called **Restore, Reinvest and Renew, or R3**.

The R3 Program uses 25% of cannabis tax revenue to fund grants for violence prevention, youth development, reentry, economic development and civil legal aid services. The grants will serve areas of the state suffering from the horrors of violence, bolstered by concentrated disinvestment, identified by high rates of gun injuries, child poverty, unemployment, and incarceration.

The JEO Initiative continuously worked with the R3 Board, and the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) to ensure the program is implemented equitably, from the solicitation of applications to the distribution of resources. We will be awarding more than \$30 million in grants for the first cycle of our R3 program. We've had what I consider to be one of the most successful and equitable processes this state has ever seen. This began with a simple, yet powerful premise—listening. What I know for sure is that those who have the least, and have experienced the most, must have a seat at the table because they know best what is needed. So, we met with the communities severely impacted by the war on drugs. They spoke. We acted.

Communities said they wanted R3 grants to be accessible, so we built out a website and did virtual town halls throughout the state. Communities said they needed more time to apply, so we doubled the time frame that the applications would be available.

Communities said they wanted people from the community to be a part of the award process, so we trained more than 150 community members to be a part of the application review process.

Under R3:

- We convened a working group of research experts from across the state to identify eligible areas for funding by their rates of gun injuries, child poverty, unemployment and incarceration
- We convened a working group of grantmaking experts to make recommendations to the R3 board on best practices.
- We worked with the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) to build the R3 website for easy public access.
- We worked with ICJIA to create equitable Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), that assessed: (a) whether applicants will serve high needs areas; (b) whether organizations are headquartered in an R3 zone; (c) whether at least 50% of their staff live in an R3 area.
- We collaborated with Legislative Black Caucuses and other stakeholders, to promote the R3 program in the community.
- We convened a subcommittee of researchers to develop an evaluation plan for recommendations to the R3 board.

As a restorative justice practitioner, I believe this program is designed with restorative justice principles that seek to heal systemic harm that has caused generational pain and trauma. As R3 Board chair, I have seen how this entire process has been carried out with an equity-focused objective to transform how state and local governments address historical disinvestment and community suffering.

We must bring compassion and a sense of community into policy making in order to ensure that this country lives up to its promise of justice and equity for all. The R3 Program is a prime example of this and how using state government resources can improve public safety outcomes without relying on the traditional justice system.

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*Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton is excited to serve Illinois as the state's 48<sup>th</sup> Lieutenant Governor, and she is the first African American to hold this office. Her portfolio of work includes leading the Justice, Equity and Opportunity Initiative, and chairing the Illinois Council on Women and Girls, the Governor's Rural Affairs Council, the Military Economic Development Council and the Illinois Rivers Coordinating Council. Stratton is the chair of the R3 Board (Restore, Reinvest, Renew) and she co-chairs the*

*Opioid Prevention and Recovery Steering Committee. Lieutenant Governor Stratton currently serves as treasurer of the National Lieutenant Governors Association. She is also a Cohort 6 Fellow of the Hunt Institute's Hunt-Kean Leadership Fellows Program. Previously, Stratton represented the 5<sup>th</sup> District in the Illinois House of Representatives.*