

# A NEW LEAF

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## A ROOT & REBOUND INITIATIVE TO END THE WAR ON DRUGS



**The legacy of the War on Drugs persists in California, and it's high time for holistic solutions.** While the legal industry is booming, tens of thousands of Californians are still living with the collateral consequences of failed drug war policies —effectively locking them out of this new economy. Root & Rebound is uniquely positioned to unlock opportunities for these people, their families, and entire communities most harmed across the state. To leverage this position, we're seeking partnership and investment from equity-driven companies in the cannabis space who want to be part of repairing the harms of the War on Drugs (WoD).

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## ROOT & REBOUND'S MISSION & EXPERIENCE

Root & Rebound (R&R) is California's only statewide legal advocacy organization supporting the tens of thousands of people who've been impacted by mass incarceration and the WoD. Our mission is to restore power and resources to these people, their families, and their entire communities through legal advocacy, public education, policy reform and litigation—a model rooted in the needs and expertise of people who are directly impacted.

Since our 2013 founding, R&R has built an unparalleled reach across CA. In 7 years, we've:

- Provided legal support to 7,000+ people via our hotline and at 110+ legal clinics;
- Trained 10,000+ people with records about their rights and employment pathways;
- Created [a comprehensive library of free reentry educational resources.](#)

In 2020, we conducted an evaluation of our clients and trainees which revealed the significant impact of our support: Among clients surveyed, only 42% were employed when they sought R&R's support, yet after our intervention, 85% had secured employment and 68% had more secure housing. Among trainees, 91% reported a stronger understanding of the criminal legal system and 89% have encouraged their employer to offer people with records job opportunities.

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## **THE NEW LEAF TOOLKIT & R&R'S EXPERTISE COMBATting THE WAR ON DRUGS**

Building on this history and demonstrable impact, R&R has become the foremost expert on the impact of cannabis and other drug-related felony conviction histories in CA. In 2020, with the generous sponsorship and partnership of Viola Brands, we developed the New Leaf toolkit, the first comprehensive legal guide for those impacted by the WoD. The toolkit—a 75-page guide developed by three reentry attorneys drawing on R&R's seven years of legal practice and the guidance of cannabis industry leaders and systems-impacted people currently working in the industry—provides thorough and digestible legal and practical information for people with drug felonies seeking to reenter the workforce, especially the cannabis industry, amid CA's changing criminal justice landscape.

Furthermore, R&R attorneys have specialized experience advising people on overcoming the unique economic obstacles that result from drug-related conviction histories. Our main avenues for direct legal support are our responsive mobile legal clinics and Reentry Legal Hotline—both critical tools for increasing access to justice for systems-impacted people in California, where there is only 1 legal aid attorney for every 10,000 indigent people. R&R has expertise tailoring our holistic, one-on-one attorney support via these avenues to address the reentry barriers that those with felony drug conviction histories most commonly face, including: record analysis and expungement to open pathways to opportunity; support in securing licenses needed for 1 in 5 CA jobs; support in challenging housing or employment denials; and more.



When impactful, R&R also offers direct representation on these matters and centers these issues within our policy advocacy. For example, our attorneys were among the first in CA to argue the implementation of the Fair Chance Occupational Licensing Law (AB 2138) that went into effect in 2020—on behalf of a client being denied a license, and a livelihood, due to a decade-old marijuana related conviction. Furthermore, in 2018 R&R's policy advocacy team had the privilege of supporting this legislation's enactment through centering our client's voices in policy discussions.



R&R attorneys also lead frequent know-your-rights trainings for clients as well as social service providers. In 2021 our trainings will target individuals with drug related conviction histories and the communities who support them. The trainings will share the New Leaf toolkit curriculum as well as other self-help resources from our comprehensive reentry legal library.

Lastly, we've already begun building partnerships with equity-driven cannabis companies—thus far including Viola Brands, Perfect Union, and OpenNest. We've educated them on fair chance hiring practices and worked alongside them to provide pathways for our WoD-harmed clients to economically benefit from the booming industry. We hope that equity-driven companies like yours will follow in the footsteps of Viola, who has generously supported our work through the sponsorship of the New Leaf toolkit.



**All this said, we're just getting started.** We've got big plans to leverage this new educational tool in 2021, and we're looking for new partners that can bring these plans to life.

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## OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP FOR YOUR COMPANY & BRAND

### 1. Sponsorship & Philanthropy

**Investment in R&R's Direct Service & Policy Change Capacity:** The number one factor limiting R&R's ability to reach more Californians impacted by drug-related conviction histories is the capacity of our legal team. Given financial investment, R&R could significantly expand the breadth of our legal advocacy available to people impacted by the War on Drugs across CA by devoting more members of our legal and frontline staff to clinics targeting this population.



- Each investment of \$25,000 allows R&R to host one legal clinic in a community significantly impacted by the WoD, through which we can support 30-50 impacted people and their families.
- An investment of \$250,000 would fund R&R's Reentry Legal Hotline for a full year, allowing us to reach 1,600+ impacted people.

**Sponsor a Know Your Rights Training/Convening/Workshop for People with Records in Your Community:** Focusing on the content of a New Leaf, collaborating with Community Based Organizations across the state—training FICP and their advocates about their rights, and bringing employers and job developers to the table to talk about building a pipeline for employment. We hope to do a number of these events, virtually and in person as allowed, in 2021.

**Support our Systems Changing and Policy Work:** To end the oppressive use of the law, each year our team takes on some of the most difficult policy reform and impact litigation campaigns alongside directly impacted people. Since we are a small team with no team members exclusively dedicated to policy, we are unable to take on as many issues as we would like. With more resources we can prioritize policy work that is responsive to the specific barriers our clients with drug convictions are experiencing. Additional investment can enable us to prioritize legislation that removes barriers to employment for formerly incarcerated people as well as advocate for infrastructures that create pathways to ownership in the cannabis industry.

## ***2. Hire Us to Lead a Fair Chance Training for Your Company:***

Equity-driven companies in the cannabis space have a unique opportunity to lead the way in the movement for Fair Chance Hiring by committing to conduct holistic assessments of job applicants and make conditional employment offers before inquiring about criminal backgrounds. R&R can consult with companies to help them take the steps necessary to become a Fair Chance employer. We work directly with employers to develop tailored legal compliance offerings and an accompanying cost structure that best suit their needs and desired outcomes. See our free abbreviated one hour intro training [here](#) and accompanying resource guide [here](#).

## ***3. Lend Your Expertise & Volunteer with Us on the New Leaf Initiative***

**PR Support:** R&R welcomes the pro bono comms support of companies in the cannabis-space, such as helping disseminate the New Leaf toolkit, elevating R&R's comms about upcoming clinics and events, or calling their networks to action around our policy campaigns. We particularly encourage the support of community-based retail dispensaries who wish to share our resources with their consumers. Together we can significantly increase the reach, impact, and narrative-changing potential of this work.

**Industry Expertise:** The potential impact of a partnership can also be significantly bolstered if partners lend their expertise on employment within the cannabis industry to R&R's clinics, events, trainings, or communications campaigns. We are particularly interested in partners who can educate our clients and event attendees on the numerous employment opportunities in the cannabis and related industries and best practices for gaining employment in these fields. This would simultaneously create an opportunity for clients and event attendees to make vital personal and professional connections that can lead to tangible employment opportunities.

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*Thank you again for your interest in R&R and your commitment to ensuring that those impacted by the WoD can share in the prosperity of the cannabis industry. We look forward to creating more just and equitable communities together. To contact R&R about partnering or investing in our work, please email [Eliana Green](mailto:Eliana.Green@rootandrebounce.org), Equal Justice Works Fellow, [egreen@rootandrebounce.org](mailto:egreen@rootandrebounce.org).*