

January 9, 2013

Dear Mr. Patrick Kennedy,

On behalf of our tens of thousands of medical marijuana patient-members, we at Americans for Safe Access (ASA) must express our disappointment in your statements earlier this week promoting your new organization, Smart Approaches to Marijuana. As a former Congressman, it is laudable that you are seeking a “smart approach” to marijuana, however, by saying things like “marijuana destroys the brain,” and that, “it’s just overall a very dangerous drug,” you appear to be informed by increasingly outdated information. To be fair, the science of medical marijuana is rapidly evolving. And, in order to catch you up on the latest research, we would like to cordially invite you to Americans for Safe Access’ National Medical Cannabis Unity Conference, taking place February 22nd-25th in Washington, D.C.

The opening day of the conference will be dedicated solely to scientific research on the medical efficacy of cannabis. Co-sponsored by Patients Out of Time, the International Association for Cannabinoid Medicines, and the American Alliance of Medical Cannabis, the day will feature world-class medical marijuana researchers from around the world, presenting on the most recent advancements in the field. Additionally, Continuing Medical Education (CME) credits will be available through a program conducted by the Canadian Consortium for the Investigation of Cannabinoids and the UC-San Francisco, in collaboration with the Society of Cannabis Clinicians, entitled Cannabis in Medicine: A Primer for Health Care Professionals. The accredited CME course is an overview of the clinical use of cannabis (the scientific term for “marijuana”), providing health care professionals with up-to-date clinical information on the therapeutic benefits of cannabis and the endocannabinoid system. Beyond the scientific exchange, the day will also provide you with an opportunity to meet with actual medical marijuana patients to discuss how their physician-recommended therapy has improved their lives.

Additionally, ASA will be bringing together various stakeholders in the medical cannabis movement to participate in the Movement Building and Development portion of the conference. Along with researchers and patients, these stakeholders include labor, industry, drug policy reform, environmentalists, and veterans. The American Herbal Products Association, the United Food and Commercial Workers, Law Enforcement Against Prohibition, and Veterans for Medical Marijuana Access will be joining ASA as convening sponsors, representing a range of stakeholders. The conference will conclude with a day devoted to citizen lobbying in the halls of Congress. We could really use a former Congressman from a medical marijuana state as one of our citizen lobbyists.

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It is our hope that this conference will allow a broad base of stakeholders to meet with their fellow advocates, build their skills, and better understand the science behind medical cannabis. We want participants to leave the conference with a plan for the next two years, based on a sound public health approach. As such, we welcome your participation and invite you to join us in Washington, D.C. next month.

Sincerely,

Steph Sherer  
Executive Director  
Americans for Safe Access

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