

May 4, 2015

Dear Councilmember,

I'm writing to ask that you support the Medical Marijuana Cultivation Center Exception Temporary Amendment Act of 2015 that is being introduced by Councilmember Grosso, which would allow a cultivation center to continue to operate in the event that their application was pending or approved prior to the location being designated within a Retail Priority Area.¹

This legislation is critical to allowing a provisionally approved cultivation center to become operational at a time when the District's medical marijuana patients are experiencing severe supply shortages. By designating location as a Retail Priority Area after an operating has received provisional approval the Department of Health is disruptive not only to the applicants trying to provide sorely needed medicine for the District's Medical Marijuana Program (MMP), but ultimately harms District patients with inflated prices and supply disruptions. Allowing cultivation centers to become operational and begin serving patients is particularly urgent due to current conditions:

- Dispensaries have been forced to limit purchases to 2-3 grams, instead of the 56 grams permitted by law. This creates hardship for patients who require larger quantities or are unable to make regular visits due to limited mobility.
- Prices in D.C. for medicine are currently \$19-\$25 per gram, or about 30%-300% above average medical marijuana prices in Washington State or Colorado²
- Patients have reported temporary closures at their dispensary due to lack of supply, forcing patients to choose going without access marijuana or acquiring it from sources outside the MMP
- Legislation increasing the plant count at licensed cultivation centers will not impact availability until early Fall. By this time, the steadily increasing patient count will ensure that supply shortages continue to occur unless new cultivation centers are operational and producing medicine for patients.

¹ Available at:

http://dccouncil.us/files/user_uploads/event_testimony/04302015%20MMJ%20Industrial%20Cultivation%20Center%20Exception%20Temporary%20DRAFT.pdf

² "Denver dispensaries charge medical customers around \$10 per gram...In Seattle, medical dispensaries sell weed for \$8 to \$15 per gram." International Business Times, *Marijuana Costs In The US: How Black Market, Retail And Medical Pot Prices Compare*, Philip Ross, July 08 2014.

D.C. prices were based on the two dispensaries that make their prices publicly available on StickyGuide.com as of May 2, 2015, (see <https://www.stickyguide.com/washington-dc/dispensary-finder>, note, patients face a selection that changes daily due to supply shortages).

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Addressing the serious supply challenges facing the MMP requires that every effort be made to ensure that qualified applicants are able to obtain approval and become operational in a timely fashion once selected by the Department of Health. Patients in D.C. already pay above average prices for their medicine, and the District should be allowing approved applicants proceed and serve patients, not impose *ex post facto* red tape.

We thank you for your consideration and hope you'll vote in support of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Michael Liszewski
Government Affairs Director

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