



COVID-19 Adult-Use Cannabis Access Letter

March 20, 2020

Honorable governors and legislative leaders:

We are grateful for your public service in this extraordinarily challenging time.

In the face of the novel coronavirus, some jurisdictions are issuing shelter-in-place orders and closing all but essential businesses to slow the spread of the virus. We expect others will be grappling with similar decisions. Nationwide, the public is advised to keep at least six feet from others whenever possible and not to congregate in groups of 10 or more.

As leaders of states with both medical cannabis and adult-use laws, we write to urge you to ensure continued safe access to cannabis in a way that is consistent with public health.

Cannabis is a crucial part of the treatment regimens of hundreds of thousands of patients, including many who have vulnerable immune systems because of their advanced age or a serious medical condition. Some patients use cannabis to quell chemotherapy-induced nausea and appetite loss; others use it to reduce the number and frequency of seizures ; and still others administer cannabis to alleviate agonizing pain or PTSD. For these patients, the uncertainty created by the crisis we face is compounded by the prospect of losing access to a medicine that is essential to their wellbeing.

Many adult-use consumers are also using cannabis for therapeutic purposes. A survey of 1,000 adult-use consumers at a Colorado dispensary found that 65% used cannabis for pain relief and 74% used it to promote sleep. Some patients — including every veteran receiving health care from Veterans Affairs — have doctors who will not sign medical cannabis certifications. Therefore, efforts to preserve access to medical cannabis should include adult-use cannabis businesses.

Ensuring that medical and adult-use cannabis businesses can continue to operate will also help the economy. More than 200,000 Americans work in the state-legal cannabis industry, and they depend on the economic security provided by their jobs. Adult-use cannabis stores can also ease the economic burden at a time when state coffers are facing many demands, tax receipts are decreasing, and many residents are suddenly facing unemployment.

During this very trying time, we urge each state to take the following actions to maintain safe access to cannabis while protecting public health. Some states have already taken some of these important actions, and we are grateful for those of you who have done so.

- Declaring cannabis businesses “essential” and ensuring they do not have to shut down operations in the event of a shelter-in-place order.
- Allowing and encouraging cannabis delivery.
- Allowing and encouraging online ordering and curbside delivery.

- Providing standard operating procedures to cannabis businesses so they can implement best practices to protect public health in the face of the pandemic.
- Ensuring businesses can continue operations during the pandemic, including in the event some personnel are ill and there is a need for quick hires, such as waiving requirements that employees first receive or renew identification cards.
- Allowing medical cannabis patients' physician consultations to occur by telemedicine.
- Extending the expiration date of medical cannabis cards until after the crisis has abated.
- In the event that cannabis supplies become limited, ensuring that patients are given priority over non-patients.

We would also appreciate any other action your state can take to lessen the burden on those who benefit from cannabis, including to ensure cannabis businesses can continue to operate during this crisis.

We wish you Godspeed as you navigate your state through these uncertain times.

Sincerely,

Steve Hawkins
 Executive Director
 Marijuana Policy Project
 Maj. Neill Franklin (Ret.)
 Executive Director
 Law Enforcement Action Partnership
 Matt Kahl
 Executive Director
 Veterans for Natural Rights
 *Betty Aldworth
 Executive Director
 Students for Sensible Drug Policy

Doug Distaso
 Executive Director
 Veterans Cannabis Project
 David L. Nathan, MD, DFAPA
 President, Board of Directors
 Doctors for Cannabis Regulation
 *Rev. Alexander Sharp
 Executive Director
 Clergy for a New Drug Policy

** Organization signed on after the initial letters were sent to governors and legislative leaders.*