



Article 14 Budget Changes to the Rhode Island Medical Marijuana Program

Notable Changes to the Rhode Island Medical Marijuana Program in Article 14 of the '16-'17 State Budget

In June 2016, the Rhode Island Legislature approved Gov. Gina Raimondo's proposed state budget, including an [article](#) that creates significant reforms to the state's medical marijuana program. The budget article includes the following provisions:

- Effective April 1, 2017, each medical marijuana plant grown by a patient or caregiver must have a "tag" affixed to it. These tags, which are valid for one year, will be issued by the Department of Business regulation for \$25 each beginning January 1, 2017. Patients with financial hardship or physical disability will not be charged a fee for their plant tags.
- Patients and caregivers who cultivate medical marijuana will be required to register the location of their cultivation with the Department of Business Regulation.
- Qualifying medical marijuana patients will no longer be required to designate compassion centers in order to enter and purchase products from those facilities.
- Patients will be able to designate up to one natural person caregiver who may grow medical marijuana for up to five patients as well as up to one "authorized purchaser" who may assist a patient with the purchasing of medical marijuana from a compassion center.
- The Department of Business Regulation will begin implementing additional regulations on compassion centers, such as stricter standards for product testing and requiring a government-accessible inventory tracking system.
- The Department of Business Regulation will issue licenses to "cultivators," which are private entities that may cultivate medical marijuana to sell only to licensed compassion centers.
- The Department of Business Regulation will promulgate regulations and begin issuing licenses for cooperative cultivations (when two or more patients and/or caregivers cultivate medical marijuana in a single location together).
- Patients, caregivers, and cultivators will not be permitted to create medical marijuana extractions that involve the use of compressed, flammable gas as a solvent.
- The Department of Health will be required to process patient applications for individuals eligible for hospice care or chemotherapy treatment within five days of receiving the application.
- As of January 1, 2017, all patient and caregiver registry identification cards will be valid for one

year only, at which point they must be renewed. (We expect fees to be reduced accordingly.)

- The Department of Health and Department of Business Regulation will create a shared database that will allow law enforcement to verify the validity of registry identification cards 24-7. The database will keep all identifying information about patients confidential in order to prevent preemptive searches by law enforcement officials.
- Effective January 1, 2019, medical marijuana patients will be required to choose whether they wish to grow their own or appoint a natural person caregiver. They will no longer be able to cultivate their own medical marijuana and have a caregiver grow for them at the same time.
- All fees collected through the medical marijuana program will be deposited into a restricted receipt account to be used exclusively for the purpose of administering and regulating the medical marijuana program.