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“We change laws.”

Dispensaries and Distribution

An effective medical cannabis law must create a way for patients to obtain in-state access to marijuana that does not rely on federal cooperation — in other words, private, state-regulated growers and dispensaries. One of the most important issues in any medical cannabis program is patient access through a sufficient number of dispensaries.

A comprehensive compassionate medical law must create an adequate number of licenses for dispensaries:

- to ensure an array of strains and products are available to patients,
- to avoid jeopardizing access in the case of an individual business failing,
- to create equal access for patients regardless of their location, and
- to ensure adequate competition to keep down the cost of medication.

Dispensaries per resident

The number of dispensaries per resident in states that allow medical marijuana dispensaries ranges from 10,432 in Colorado to 1,483,223 in New Jersey.

State	Residents per dispensary
Colorado	10,432
Oregon	12,678
Nevada	42,275
Arizona	52,592
New Mexico	90,655
Vermont	156,658
Maine	166,038
D.C.	185,150
Massachusetts	191,224
Illinois	214,702
New York	982,556
New Jersey	1,483,223

Geographic diversity

States that cap the number of dispensaries — either as some fixed ratio (as in Arizona) or as a hard cap (as in Delaware) — typically include some kind of provision in either the state law or in regulations to ensure equitable distribution of dispensaries within the state.

Several states have set the number and location of dispensaries to be based on the number of counties in the state. Delaware allows for three dispensaries, one in each county. It also

allows for more dispensaries to be added if patients' needs require additional facilities. Hawaii has 18 dispensaries spread across the various islands based on population.

Other states require the oversight agency to take into consideration the need for geographic diversity when granting licenses. In Illinois, the Department of Financial and Professional Regulation has divided the state into 43 "dispensing organization districts" and must allocate between one and three dispensaries for each district.

In Arizona, the Department of Health Services issues certificates to one dispensary per 10 pharmacies in the state — or 126 dispensaries — and ensures there is at least one dispensary in each county.

Pricing

In order to ensure that patient access is not prohibited by cost, the licensing fees and any other financial requirements for dispensaries must not be excessive. Patient costs can also be kept down by increasing the number of dispensaries.

In New Jersey, where there are 745 patients per dispensary, the cost is about \$400 per ounce of marijuana. In Vermont, where there are approximately 405 patients per dispensary, the cost is \$225 per ounce.