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"We change laws."

Limiting THC Content Hurts Patients

Comprehensive medical cannabis legislation must allow patients access to all safe and effective treatments. Research indicates that the synergistic effect of different cannabinoids, including THC, may be the most effective treatment for most patients. Placing an arbitrary limit on THC content means leaving most patients without access to the treatment that may work best for them.

A THC cap is arbitrary, unnecessary, and will prohibit patient access to the most effective treatment options.

- Marijuana strains containing 11-26% THC have been used in the effective treatment of almost every condition typically included in medical cannabis laws.
- A THC cap will force patients to spend more money and consume more medication in order to reach the THC content that will effectively treat their conditions.
- A one-year Canadian study released earlier this year found that a strain with 12.5% THC effectively treated chronic pain.
- In an Israeli study on Crohn's disease that used 23% THC content, 45% of the patients went into full remission and the other 55% reported at least a 50% improvement in symptoms.
- Average THC content in Washington's medical market is 16%. In Colorado, the average is 18.7%.
- Marinol, which has only one active ingredient — synthetic THC — is the only form of medical marijuana permitted under federal law. (It is a Schedule III prescription used for nausea and wasting.)

"Including THC caps in medical cannabis legislation is cruel and misguided. Ninety percent of the Slater Compassion Center's patients administer cannabis that has more than 10% THC. Many of our patients find that these strains work best for their symptoms — including cancer, chronic pain, MS, nausea, wasting, Crohn's disease, and the side effects of weaning off of dangerous prescription medications. The suggestion that patients should be denied the strain that works best for them due to concern it might impair them would be laughable if the consequences weren't so tragic. Many of our patients report that cannabis allows them to reduce or eliminate their use of prescriptions that leave them feeling like zombies."

Gerald McGraw, Jr., CEO of the Slater Compassion Center

Strains with more than small amounts of THC treat a broad range of severe illnesses and symptoms.

Clinical trials and the experiences of hundreds of thousands of patients have shown that THC — and strains of marijuana that include more than small amounts of THC — provides important medical benefits for individuals suffering from a broad range of conditions.

- **Cancer and HIV/AIDS**: Researchers have found THC and marijuana with THC are

effective anti-emetics and appetite stimulants for individuals suffering from the side effects of cancer chemotherapy or AIDS treatment. The federal government has officially recognized THC's medical properties since 1985 when the FDA approved Marinol, a prescription drug made of synthetic THC, for nausea and vomiting associated with chemotherapy. (Many patients prefer cannabis because Marinol completely lacks other cannabinoids, is slow-acting because it is a pill, and is difficult for nauseated patients to keep down.)

- **Multiple sclerosis**: Research has found that marijuana with THC can alleviate spasticity. Several countries have approved a prescription spray called Sativex, which has a 1:1 CBD to THC ratio for multiple sclerosis spasms.
- **Chronic pain**: Several studies have found that marijuana strains that include THC can alleviate pain, including neuropathic pain — a notoriously difficult-to-treat nerve pain commonly found in amputees, AIDS patients, and patients with multiple sclerosis. One recent yearlong study in Canada found that 12.5% THC cannabis was effective in patients with chronic pain, and that it had a reasonable safety profile.
- **Crohn's disease:** A recent study from Israel using a strain that contained 23% THC found that it eased suffering in 10 out of 11 patients, with five patients going into complete remission.
- **Seizures**: Some patients with seizure disorders require higher levels of THC in order for the treatment to be effective. In addition, treatments with high levels of THC are safer alternatives to dangerous rescue medications.

"He doesn't need THC anymore but THC was crucial during the weaning process, without it Jayden would have died."

Jason David, father of Jayden who suffers from Dravet Syndrome, a devastating seizure condition, Modesto, California

Capping THC based on a theory that it would otherwise impair patients is inaccurate and misguided.

- Like all other medications, marijuana affects each patient differently. This is partly because each person's body processes THC at a different rate. A number of other factors such as BMI and frequency of use can determine whether or not a patient becomes impaired. As Dr. Igor Grant, director of the Center for Medicinal Cannabis Research noted, "[T]olerance is rapidly acquired (in two to 12 days) to many of [cannabis'] adverse effects, e.g. … many subjective and cognitive effects." **We are unaware of any evidence that a specific percentage THC causes impairment across the board.**
- Many medications cause some level of impairment, such as medication for pain or anxiety. However, while opiates are sometimes lethal and have many dangerous side effects, marijuana has a much better safety profile, and it is essentially impossible to fatally overdose on marijuana.
- If medical marijuana treatments are allowed to contain a small amount of THC, this will force patients either to turn to illegal sources or to simply consume more to reach the necessary amount. Instead of using a tincture with 50% THC, they will have to

consume five times as much of a 10% tincture. However, this will still not be as effective as using a 50% THC product because it will be diluted by the other cannabinoids.

"Imposing a cap on the percent of delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) in medical cannabis is arbitrary and not supported by science. The FDA allows THC capsules to be sold as schedule III products (prescriptions can be phoned in by doctors) and also allows manufacturers of THC pills to give pediatric dosing guidelines. Many patients find that natural cannabis works better than Marinol (the THC pill) for them. Marijuana's many cannabinoids and terpenes work synergistically. Other components balance out the negatives of THC, while enhancing the benefits. It makes no sense that pure THC pills are allowed and low-THC cannabis would be legal, but nothing in between would be — even if that is what works best for a particular patient."

Dr. Sunil Kumar Aggarwal, MD, Ph.D.