

Dear [Salutations],

On behalf of medical cannabis businesses, patients, and our communities, we would like to express our gratitude for your tireless efforts to address the COVID-19 crisis and protect your state and all Americans. We commend your leadership to-date in addressing issues critical to ensuring continued access to safe and effective medicine.

Medical cannabis businesses are working to ensure the safety of the public, especially those most at risk from COVID-19. We are committed to safely ensuring continued safe access to medical cannabis products and services. We have proactively increased hygiene and safety measures including screening employees for symptoms of illness, limiting customers and employees in stores, and to the extent allowed by local law, conducting transactions through delivery and curbside pickup.

Additionally, the cannabis industry has come together to serve our communities and support those on the frontlines of this crisis. Cannabis companies have donated personal protective equipment to first responders, hired workers laid off in other industries, and adapted manufacturing capabilities to produce hand sanitizer.¹ Many of our medical professionals have rededicated their time to providing medical services on the front lines of this pandemic.

As our nation continues to respond to the growing threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly every facet of society has altered operations in hopes of flattening the curve. State authorities have undertaken the difficult task of deciding which businesses are essential to serving their communities, supporting essential infrastructure, and ensuring the health and safety of our communities. Around the country, many states have already taken a critical first step by deeming medical cannabis businesses essential to our communities. However, we ask that more be done to ensure continued access to safe and effective medicine.

Deem medical cannabis business essential.

Similar to pharmacies and pharmaceutical manufacturers, medical cannabis businesses provide critical medicine to patients with serious and debilitating conditions. These patients rely upon cannabis to help treat and manage their conditions and symptoms. Without access to safe regulated medicine, patients could experience interruptions in care and face additional health complications that would burden healthcare systems already strained to levels unprecedented in modern history. This essential designation should apply not just to store fronts where patients purchase their medicine, but all other parts of the cannabis supply chain necessary to ensure continued safe access.

Allow home delivery with online and phone ordering.

Medical dispensaries are working to reduce person-to-person contact to the greatest extent possible. This is best accomplished by reducing the number of patients in a dispensary. Allowing delivery as well as online and phone ordering would reduce the risk of transmission by person-to-person contact by eliminating the need for patients to travel to and/or enter dispensaries. Although security measures and the lack of industry access to banking services do not allow for no-contact delivery, in states with the delivery option dispensaries are protecting patients and employees by minimizing contact and maximizing hygiene and sanitation procedures.

¹<https://www.boston.com/news/local-news/2020/04/01/marijuana-companies-hand-sanitizer-donate-hospitals>

Additionally, to ensure the most vulnerable patients throughout your state can safely receive necessary medicine, patients should be temporarily permitted to take home delivery of medical cannabis regardless of county restrictions on retail cannabis operations.

Allow curbside pickup from existing dispensaries, with online ordering.

For patients for whom delivery is not an option or preference, online or phone ordering and pickup from a secure designated location within 150 feet of the dispensary premises provides another critical tool to ensure patient safety and continued access to medicine. Dispensaries in states that have allowed pickup adjacent to dispensary premises have implemented additional safety measures including maintaining social distancing, added security, and extending age restrictions to vehicle passengers.

Allow doctors to issue recommendations and renewals via telemedicine.

Telemedicine is widely used in the healthcare industry to reduce the spread of virus and disease and to ensure access to treatment for patients with mobility challenges. Medical cannabis should be treated no differently. Allowing medical professionals to provide cannabis recommendations to patients over telemedicine, further reduces unnecessary in-person interactions.

Temporarily eliminate or reduce caregiver applications fees.

For the safety of medical cannabis patients, many states have recommended that patients designate a caregiver to ensure that patients who become sick or exhibit symptoms and cannot safely and responsibly access their medicine have an alternative way to acquire medical cannabis. Caregivers also allow high-risk patients to stay at home, reducing their chance of exposure. To facilitate this process during a time of economic strain, especially for individuals with chronic or acute illnesses, we ask that states temporarily waive or reduce caregiver application fees.

Honor medical cannabis documentation within 90 days of expiration.

Visits to doctors' offices increase the risk of exposure for vulnerable cannabis patients. Even telemedicine appointments place additional strain on medical professionals, many of whom are reducing clinic hours to serve their communities during this crisis.

Medical cannabis patients must have continued safe access to medicine. Extending expired medical cannabis documentation for 90 days would help minimize treatment lapses for some of the state's most vulnerable citizens and help reduce strain on our healthcare system. Extending expired documentation would also help ensure patients are protected from unintended legal consequences for continuing necessary treatment.

Temporarily amend existing regulations to ensure adequate staffing.

The industry is adapting to ensure continued patient access to medical cannabis and the production of other medical supplies. With a sudden shift in business operations, new staffing needs arise. As essential businesses, medical cannabis businesses that adapt to meet the altered nature of business can provide new jobs.

Cannabis businesses are subject to significant regulatory hurdles in hiring that cause time-constraints in hiring. To ensure continuous operability for cannabis businesses producing medical cannabis and other medical products, states should consider amending unduly burdensome requirements for new cannabis business employees to facilitate timely hiring.

On behalf of medical cannabis businesses, patients, and our communities, we again express our gratitude for your leadership and work to ensure continued access to safe and effective medicine. We will continue to support our patients and communities as we work to flatten the curve. Medical cannabis businesses provide medicine essential to many in our communities. We welcome the opportunity to help identify and implement safe means to ensure continued access to medicine.

Regards,

