

# VERMONT MEDICAL SOCIETY

To: Members of the House Human Services Committee  
From: Jessa Barnard, Vice President for Policy, Vermont Medical Society  
Date: April 27, 2016  
Re: Vermont Medical Society Position on S. 14

*The Vermont Medical Society – representing medical doctors (MDs) and doctors of osteopathic medicine (DOs)- supports two provisions in S. 14 but has concerns with several other proposed changes the bill may make to the Marijuana for Medical Use program. Below we address changes included in the current version of the bill as well as anticipated amendments.*

#### Requirement for child-resistant packaging (Section 4)

- The Medical Society is in support of a requirement that marijuana infused products be in child-resistant packaging. Many of the products for purchase at a dispensary could be appealing to children – indistinguishable from other baked goods or candy – and we support any measure to prevent the ingestion of such products by children.

#### Requirement to identify the amount of THC contained in a product (Section 4)

- The Medical Society is in support of a requirement that dispensaries identify the amount of THC contained in a marijuana-infused edible or potable product. One reason physicians may be hesitant to certify their patients for the marijuana program is the fact that, unlike FDA approved medications, the physician and patient may not know the amount of the active ingredient contained in any product obtained from a dispensary. For those who choose to participate in the medical marijuana program, it would be helpful to know the amount of THC contained in any given product.

#### Adding to the list of “debilitating medical conditions”

- The Medical Society believes that there should be a sufficient basis in scientific evidence for any condition to be added to the list for which individuals can obtain marijuana. According to a recent review of the evidence conducted by the Vermont Department of Health, while there is strong evidence that marijuana may alleviate symptoms for some conditions, such as symptoms of cancer and multiple sclerosis, there is limited to no evidence of its usefulness for several other conditions, such as sleep, social anxiety and PTSD. Based on the lack of any credible studies demonstrating clinical effectiveness of marijuana in treating PTSD, the American Psychiatric Association opposes allowing the use of marijuana for those with the condition. We have attached the APA position, page 4 of the January 2016 report by the Department of Health, as well as a review of the literature published by the Journal of the American Medical Association in June 2015.

#### Reduction in requirement for a 6-month health care professional-patient relationship

- The Vermont Medical Society has concerns about efforts to reduce the requirement for a 6-month health care professional-patient relationship before a health care professional can complete a verification form. The current program rules already provide exceptions in cases of terminal illness, cancer with distant metastases or AIDs. If the limitation is lifted, we have concerns that “marijuana mills” may appear where patients simply pay an examination fee and walk out with a verification form, as has been seen in other states without the closely regulated program that Vermont has in place. See for example, the article in the Bangor Daily News about walk-in clinics that have appeared in Maine: “It works like this: A person walks into the clinic, pays \$200, is seen by a medical professional who takes his or her vital signs and asks questions about the person’s health history. Depending on the answers, the person receives education about the medical use of marijuana, including possible side effects, and a document qualifying the person to purchase medical marijuana. ...It takes about 45 minutes...” See also the website from “MMJ Physician Services” who advertise that for \$219 you can obtain a certification under Maine law.

#### Change to Review Board (Section 2)

- The Vermont Medical Society supports the current composition of the Review Board and believes Board has been working well, meeting approximately monthly to review appeals of application denials and comparing the statutory requirements to the information provided in the application.

Thank you for your consideration of our positions and please contact us if we can provide you with any further information.