

To: House Judiciary and Human Services Committees
From: Monique McHenry, Ph.D., Executive Director, Vermont Patients Alliance Inc. (VPA)
Re: S.241
Date: March 31, 2016

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My testimony will highlight the current activities in the Vermont dispensaries. I would like to stress the need for these dispensaries to remain sustainable if an adult-use market were to be legalized and regulated.

Current Vermont Dispensary Services

VPA currently:

- Serves 30% of the 2,500 Vermonters with debilitating medical conditions.
 - We see one patient at a time and spend 10-30 minutes discussing each patient's condition and which products will provide the best therapeutic advantage.
- Tests potency, develops new plant-based pharmaceutical products, and performs clinical trials to build physician confidence.
- Is establishing a certification programs for testing and labeling.
 - I have brought examples of our products and labels for reference.
- Educates physicians and patients on plant-based medicines, including medical *Cannabis*, as a safe alternative to conventional medications, such as opioids for chronic pain.
 - In particular, we explain dosage, delivery, and side effects.
 - I am one of the co-directors for the new UVM COM Medical *Cannabis* course. Through this course, we are compiling a large amount of scientific data, including medical research studies, which we are sharing with VT patients through different educational handouts and posters.
- Conducts experiments with local Vermont Companies to determine and help develop the best locally produced products to support the *Cannabis* industry.

Future Vermont Dispensary Goals

Sustained Viability

In order for the Vermont dispensaries to remain viable businesses in an adult-use market, we need to have consistency between adult-use and medical rules, business structure, and access to Vermonters that could benefit from the therapeutic use of medical *Cannabis*. We suggest, at the very least, adding opioid addiction and debilitating chronic pain as qualifying medical conditions. Our clinical research has demonstrated that there appears to be a substitution effect, where access to *Cannabis* leads to decreased pain medication and opioid use.

Research

We would like more state and private funding to do innovative research on *Cannabis* and other plant-based medicines. We believe that Vermont dispensaries and Vermont universities are positioned to not only conduct this research, but also to be a national leader in *Cannabis* research

and development. To conduct research at academic institutions in conjunction with Vermont dispensaries, we need the access to products manufactured at Vermont dispensaries.

We support this language in S.241: “With approval from the Department, transport and transfer marijuana to a Vermont academic institution for the purpose of research.”

Testing and Labeling

We suggest that testing and labeling be mandated in both the medical and adult-use industry as proposed in S.241. Currently there is nothing in Vermont rule or law that requires medical dispensaries to test or label our products with the amounts of Cannabinoids. We voluntarily test and label our products, because we believe it is necessary for safe delivery of our product.

I have brought a White Paper from the PhytoScience Institute, a Vermont-based think tank, that has formulated recommendations to define the best practices for analytical laboratories that perform testing of *Cannabis* and *Cannabis*-derived products intended for human consumption. Their recommendations can serve as a roadmap for policy makers seeking direction in the uncharted territory of *Cannabis* in public health and safety considerations.