

23 March 2020

Governor Larry Hogan, Chair
Governor Andrew Cuomo, Vice Chair
Members, Executive Committee
National Governors Association
444 N. Capitol St NW, Ste. 267
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: EMERGENCY CALL TO ACTION TO GOVERNORS IN STATES WITH MEDICAL CANNABIS PROGRAMS

Dear Chair Hogan, Vice Chair Cuomo, & Members of the Executive Committee:

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the undersigned national drug policy, HIV/AIDS, and public health organizations write to all U.S. governors and medical cannabis program directors to amplify a letter sent last week by the nation's leading medical cannabis and patient advocacy group, Americans for Safe Access (ASA). We are joining their call for necessary, immediate actions and safeguards to ensure that medical cannabis patients do not experience disrupted access to crucial medicine.

Thirty-three states and the District of Columbia have medical cannabis laws enacted and, cumulatively, these states serve over [three](#) million patients. Medical cannabis patients often live with debilitating ailments, such as cancer, HIV/AIDS, and chronic pain that significantly affect quality of life. It is critical that policymakers and other decision makers who are working to address the current COVID-19 pandemic are also considering the public health consequences that will follow the decision to abruptly interrupt the legal supply chain for medical cannabis patients. We are especially worried about vulnerable patients being unintentionally pushed to the unregulated market, where there will not be access to lab-tested, tightly controlled products. This could endanger the health of those who rely on cannabis as medicine.

The undersigned organizations -- who support research and access to medical cannabis -- join ASA in calls for the recognition of medical cannabis as necessary medicine and for the recommendations below to be implemented to ensure that patients' access to medicinal cannabis will continue.

We understand that we are living through unprecedented and uncertain times. We urge you to consider these recommendations as crucial steps to bring some certainty and relief to patients.

Sincerely,



**AIDS United • Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center • CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers • Compass LGBTQ Community Center • Drug Policy Alliance
Harm Reduction Coalition • Marijuana Policy Project • National Minority AIDS Council
National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance (NQAPIA) • NORML • Oklahomans for Equality
The Pride Center at Equality Park • SOJOURN • Students for Sensible Drug Policy**

March 16, 2020

EMERGENCY CALL TO ACTION TO GOVERNORS OF MEDICAL CANNABIS STATES **An Important Message About Medical Cannabis Access and COVID-19**

Dear Governors and Medical Cannabis Program Directors:

As Governors are creating emergency plans in their states to address the COVID-19 virus, Americans for Safe Access and our allies would like to offer some guidance when addressing medical cannabis patients, who represent some of the states' most vulnerable citizens. We are calling on states to take precautions now to help ensure that patients have access today and that measures are taken to ensure that the supply chain is not interrupted.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has hinted that it may call for all non-essential businesses to close to prevent the spread of the virus. Medical cannabis patients rely on dispensaries in their states to provide them with medication, which is life-saving to many patients.

We know that many states are currently taking action to help patients continue to access their medicine through different strategies. For example, the California Bureau of Cannabis Control is working with CA businesses that serve medical cannabis patients by granting temporary changes in business plans that take into account the needs of patients and workers during this crisis. In Pennsylvania, medical marijuana dispensaries will remain open since they fall into the same classification as pharmacies, which makes them essential.

To help avert another public health crisis, we encourage all state programs to be flexible at this time to allow for additional precautions to be put in place to protect the millions of patients nationwide that rely on this medicine.

It is our recommendation that governors and/or medical cannabis directors put the following measures into place immediately to ensure that patients do not have disrupted access to their medicine:



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Twitter: [@SafeAccess](https://twitter.com/SafeAccess)
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ASA is the largest national nonprofit organization of patients, medical cannabis providers, medical professionals, scientists and concerned citizens promoting safe and legal access to cannabis for therapeutic use and research with over 100,000 advocates in all 50 states.



Advancing Legal Medical Marijuana Therapeutics and Research

1. Make sure that cannabis businesses that serve patients are considered "essential" businesses.
2. Instruct medical cannabis businesses on how they can make legal temporary changes to their business plans, including delivery and purchase limits, to accommodate patients and staff during the crisis.
3. Give tax relief to patients and businesses.
4. Allow cultivation and processing centers to stay open to ensure a steady supply of medicine in the future.
5. Extend the expiration dates of state-issued cannabis identification cards so that doctors and other health care providers can focus on COVID-19.
6. Permit authorized caregivers to serve additional patients during the crisis period.
7. Allow telehealth visits for new and renewing medical cannabis patients.
8. Allow dispensaries to deliver medical cannabis to qualifying patients and caregivers in vehicles parked in the dispensary parking lots.

We understand that determining the best means by which to keep your communities safe is no easy task, and we thank you for taking our recommendations into consideration as you craft strategies to ensure that medical cannabis will be available to all patients in need throughout this public health emergency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Debbie M. Churgai".

Debbie Churgai
Interim Director
Americans for Safe Access



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