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Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
County Administration Building
104 E. Anapamu St.
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Re: Access to Medicinal Cannabis

Dear Board:

I see where you are about to consider a moratorium on medicinal cannabis dispensaries. I hope that the media is emphasizing the wrong thing and that either then create barriers for the ill to surmount in order to legally obtain a medicine that the FDA's Chief Administrative Law Judge said was one of the safest therapeutic agents known to man and that you are really looking to tax and regulate. Whatever you believe your task is, I want to remind you that when dealing with the dispensary ordinance, what you should be talking about is providing access to medicinal cannabis, a safe, effective medicine for severely ill patients.

My Experience With Medical Use of Cannabis

As you know, I have substantial experience in providing drug abuse treatment and prevention, assessing quality of care, delivering health care to low income people, pain management and cannabinoid medicine. I have been doing medicinal cannabis assessments pursuant to 215 for over 9 years. In that time I've seen roughly 2000 different patients. My normal office visit lasts an hour. I have delivered talks at Kaiser St. Theresa Hospital in San Jose, the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, in Orlando at the American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine, California State Health Department AIDS Conference testified as an invited witness before the Wisconsin State Senate Health Committee, testified before the Oregon Health Department Committee on covered conditions, testified before the AMA, and submitted written testimony to the Iowa Board of Pharmacy and been named Doctor of the Day by the Wall Street Journal Health Blog. It is based on my extensive experience that I am requesting you keep the patients in the forefront of your deliberations.

Scope of Conditions

In California, unlike other states where the medicinal use of cannabis is legal, we not only have a discrete list of conditions such as pain, migraines, etc. that physicians are allowed to recommend cannabis for, but physicians also have the legal right to use their discretion to recommend cannabis for "any other medical condition" for which we feel cannabis will be medically useful. This has allowed cannabis to be used for the psychological problems. Other conditions that cannabis may benefit include: seizures, glaucoma – cannabis decreases intraocular pressure by

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approximately 25% – peripheral neuropathy, asthma, and irritable bowel syndrome. Research by Professor Daniel Piomelli, a pharmacologist at the University of California, Irvine, demonstrates that cannabis may be of benefit to people with bipolar disorder, Tourette's syndrome, ADD, and panic attacks. Clinical experience supports Professor Piomelli's contention.

I am the Vice President of a national organization, the American Academy of Cannabinoid Medicine (AACM). All our practicing physician members can tell you of the benefits that our patients have received from the medicinal use of cannabis. I have incredible compelling stories. I will share a couple of patient vignettes:

Cannabis provides many of my patients with some relief from their physical and psychological conditions. I have had numerous referrals from at least 70 local physicians. I have seen excellent results from the medicinal use of cannabis in treating a whole host of conditions.

At my office we pre-screen patients to avoid making appointments for patients with trivial medical complaints and/or who have inadequate documentation of a serious medical problem. We see patients with very serious medical conditions. The average office visit is 50 minutes.

Remember this is about the patients

It is very emotional to think about the possibility that due to actions by various levels of government that some of my patients may not be able to have access to cannabis. This could occur as a result of unrealistic restrictions that you are contemplating on dispensaries.

Just the other day I saw a lovely young woman who is a quad as a result of a MVA three (3) years ago. She propels her wheelchair by means of blowing in a tube. She uses cannabis for relieve of pain and spasticity.

- An 85 y.o. ex-Marine, a throat cancer survivor who was dieing from starvation. He used cannabis as an appetite stimulant and mood elevator and is alive today.
- A 36 y.o. hemiplegic woman with intractable epilepsy that was well controlled by cannabis.
- A Vietnam era vet who had shrapnel removed from the brain to stop intractable seizures. As a result of the surgery some of the visual cortex was removed and he got double vision and headaches. Cannabis has given him the relief which has allowed him to productively participate in civic affairs for over 30 years and the examples go on and on.
- Just recently a 52 y.o. grandmother came in who had lost over 30 pounds due to gastrophoresis caused by diabetes came in. She too had been wasting away. She tried regular use of marijuana and within two months had gained 20 pounds. She characterized what marijuana had done for her as a miracle.
- Then there was the patient who had back surgery, went scuba diving a few months after the surgery (after checking with the surgeon). As a result of the dive he somehow became temporarily quadrapalegic and permanently parapalegic. He had excruciating pain from

T-10 on down. He said cannabis was the only thing that provided pain relief and made life bearable.

I can tell you about the productive lives of my patients. They include the principal of a high school, the mayor of a small city, criminal justice system employees, a counselor at a drug treatment program, a very famous movie director and lots of people with everyday jobs in construction, medicine, education and law and society – contractors, developers, doctors, nurses, professors. There are normal people with a wide variety of serious illnesses. The one thing they have in common is that cannabis gives them relief with fewer side effects than prescription medicine.

Conclusion

From a practical scientific and historical point of view, you are on solid ground and in good company in recognizing the medicinal value of cannabis and cannabinoids. Cannabis has been used as a medicine for over 10,000 years. It is safe, effective and well researched. Over 15,000 basic scientific and clinical studies have been done.

I urge you to reject the federal government propoganda, set the aside the stereotypes and cultural hysteria and look at this issue not as one where the goal is to set up unrealistic barriers for the ill and infirm but to facilitate having nurses and pharmacists work with physicians to help alleviate the suffering of the ill and dieing.

There are millions of patients throughout the world who are already benefiting from this medicine and millions more could. This is a therapeutic agent that should be available in pharmacies as it once was. If you are concerned that none of the existing pharmacies will risk possible draconian action by the federal government, I urge you to draft requirements that allow dispensaries to be run by nurses and pharmacists.

I am sure that you will handle this with the medical needs of the ill upper most in your minds. To do otherwise and deny an effective medicine with few side effects to serious ill patients would be nothing short of political malpractice.

Sincerely yours,


David Bearman, M.D.

cc: Santa Barbara Independent