



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Wednesday January 7, 2015

Contact: Lynsee Swisher,
media@wacannabusiness.org

Professional Association of Licensed Cannabis Businesses Endorses Cannabis Patient Protection Act

Proposed legislation closes loopholes to support single, regulated and taxed legalized cannabis marketplace

OLYMPIA – The Washington CannaBusiness Association today announced its support of the Cannabis Patient Protection Act, the first legislation of its kind before the Washington State Legislature to close the remaining loopholes in the marijuana marketplace. The Cannabis Patient Protection Act will help ensure that all legalized cannabis in Washington is covered by a single voter-mandated system for safe, regulated and taxed cannabis products from seed to sale. In addition, the bill recognizes that legitimate patients should have access to safe products and authorizes a tax break to help patients acquire what they need.

The Cannabis Patient Protection Act already enjoys bipartisan support from all four corners of the state and leaders from both sides of the aisle have sponsored the legislation. Senator Ann Rivers (R, 18) is the bill's sponsor, and Senator Brian Hatfield (D, 19) is the co-sponsor.

“Washington State is poised to reap the public safety and revenue benefits from a successful legal marijuana market,” said Rivers. “Passage of the Cannabis Patient Protection Act will truly reconcile the initiative that created the medical-marijuana system with the promise of Initiative 502 by stifling the black market for marijuana and providing legal products that are safe for consumers. In addition, patients who truly need access to affordable medicinal cannabis products deserve a safe environment in which to do so. This legislation will erase any ambiguity in the existing medical market, ensure safe patient access and strengthen the system put in place by Washington voters.”

“What we are really looking for is a way to simplify and streamline a system that is unequal in its application to business people in the legalized marijuana market,” said Senator Hatfield. “The medical set-up from 16 years ago is not regulated, not quality-controlled, has no oversight and does not pay the taxes that those in the system established by 502 pay. The Cannabis Patient Protection Act is intended to get medical marijuana patients the products they depend on, while also ensuring that ALL producers, processors and retailers of cannabis products are subject to the same oversight.”

Among its key provisions, the Cannabis Patient Protection Act will require that all sellers of cannabis products in the state, including medical operations, meet the same requirements as those that were established by Initiative 502. Those requirements include:

- background checks
- security and traceability of product
- laboratory testing for safety and potency, labeling, and quality control.

Currently, the medical market contains zero provisions to protect consumers.

Washington CannaBusiness Association (WACA) spokesperson Lynsee Swisher emphasized the critical nature of the legislation to WACA members, comprised solely of licensed producers, processors and retailers of legal cannabis. “Our members represent business owners of every size, in rural and urban areas, who like mom-and-pop startups everywhere have invested time and resources to establish and grow their businesses. The Cannabis Patient Protection Act levels the marketplace so that those who have taken all the steps to build and participate in the legitimate, regulated, taxpaying industry are not unfairly burdened by following the law, especially when the completely unregulated medicinal marketplace of 1998 flourishes free from safety or quality controls, taxes or oversight of any kind.”

The legislation removes the ambiguity between the newly-established regulated marketplace and the so-called “gray” medicinal market, which to-date allows anyone to put a green cross on the front door and begin to sell unregulated pot. The Cannabis Patient Protection Act clarifies the basic requirements for the medicinal market to protect consumers and also to ensure that only legitimate patients have access to tax breaks.

“Many people who were growing and selling cannabis in the gray market were among the first to sign up to participate in the process to become licensed. But for those who remain, not only are they unfairly advantaged by being subject to no regulation or taxation, but their customers have none of the protections or safeguards that 502-licensed businesses guarantee,” said WACA’s Swisher.

The bill will be filed this week and is expected to have a hearing in the Senate Health Care Committee very soon.

About Washington CannaBusiness Association

Washington CannaBusiness Association solely represents Washington’s licensed and regulated cannabis businesses and provides its members with general support and representation before regulatory agencies and the legislature. As an association of cannabis producers, processors and retailers who have gathered to promote the private cannabis industry created by Initiative 502 and our member companies, our mission is to advocate on behalf of our member companies in the legislative, regulatory, legal and public policy arenas.

Learn more about Washington CannaBusiness Association by visiting our website at <http://www.wacannabusiness.org>

###