



Governor Chris Christie Announces Bi-Partisan Agreement on Medicinal Marijuana

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Trenton, NJ – Governor Chris Christie today announced a bi-partisan agreement with the Assembly primary sponsor of the state's medicinal marijuana law on regulations that will ensure timely access to medicinal marijuana for qualified patients while at the same time ensuring the program has adequate safety and security controls.

Governor Christie applauded Assemblyman and Deputy Majority Leader Reed Gusciora for working with the Governor's Office and staff at the state Department of Health and Senior Services to reach the accord on the medicinal marijuana regulations.

"Our agreement with Assemblyman Gusciora is an example of how reasonable minds can come together and craft solutions that are in the best interests of our state," Governor Christie said. "Working together, we have come to an agreement that will prevent further delay to patients who need relief from the symptoms of debilitating illnesses. At the same time, we are protecting the interests of all residents of the state of New Jersey by preventing some of the abuses that we have seen in other states."

The agreement reflects a good-faith compromise between the Administration and the primary sponsor of the legislation on the best way to move forward with a responsible, medically-based program that will avoid the significant fraud and criminal diversion problems experienced in states like California and Colorado.

The key changes in the regulations as a result of bi-partisan agreement are:

- Six Alternative Treatment Centers – two each in the north, central and southern regions of the state—will be permitted and each will be able to both dispense and grow medicinal marijuana.
- Home delivery and satellite locations for the Alternative Treatment Centers will no longer be allowed.
- Only the debilitating conditions originally contained in the law will be subject to the provision that all conventional therapies have been exhausted before a physician can recommend a patient for medicinal marijuana.

The rules still require a maximum THC level of 10 percent. Physicians still must have an ongoing relationship with a patient. Over the course of the first two years of the program, the Department of Health and Senior Services will evaluate many different aspects of the program and consider changes as necessary or appropriate.

"This is a reasonable and fair resolution that will keep implementation of the program on track without unnecessary delay," said Assemblyman Gusciora. "I appreciate the Governor's willingness to work with me on reaching this agreement, which meets our respective concerns. The most important outcome is that those most in need of the benefits of medicinal marijuana will get the relief they need and are entitled to under the law."

"As a physician, it remains important to me that patients who are recommended for medicinal marijuana must have an ongoing relationship with a bona fide physician – who continues to monitor not only their underlying medical condition but their response to medicinal marijuana," said Health and Senior Services Commissioner Dr. Poonam Alaigh. "These changes preserve the integrity of the physician-patient relationship."

The Department of Health and Senior Services had scheduled a public hearing on the original rules for Monday in the War Memorial. That hearing has been cancelled because of today's agreement on changes to the regulations.

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