

Protecting Patients: Lessons from Colorado



CANNA - PATIENT RESOURCE CONNECTION

Prohibitionists Pushback!



Since 2012, multiple states have legalized recreational cannabis use, with both amazing and negative consequences for patients. While recreational allows a patient to remain incognito, taxes on recreational become the addictive lure that causes potential damage to patient programs.

Patients in every “legal” state are now facing their medical program disintegrating in favor of a single-system recreational

market. Washington State saw over 100 medical dispensaries close, leaving patients with out access. Grow rights and store fronts are being attacked in Colorado, Alaska, and Oregon.

Specifically in Colorado, lawmakers waited several years after legalization to launch the effort to stunt the voter’s will. All at once, local municipalities decided to use “home rule” in order to limit both the patient’s ability to grow, and restrict caregiver/ dispensary access. People are scrambling to find needed strains at a price they can afford. Some patients in Colorado are paying between \$1500-\$3000/month for their access.

Beware of Home Rule

A quick Wikipedia search on *Home Rule in the US*, comes up with a list of states that abide by *home rule*. If your state participates, then a local municipality can “opt out” of any legislation that it deems harmful. In home rule states with any form of cannabis law, most

municipalities have decided to restrict or opt out entirely of state allowed programs.

In Colorado, visitors often remark that they were surprised at just how restricted Colorado’s cannabis industry is. Media images of people on streets smoking joints have led to

Unfortunately, the better established cannabis businesses are actually helping local and state governments to pass unnecessary regulations on patients. Fewer patients growing, means more patients in dispensaries.

It is important for your community to put as many protections in place when legalizing medical programs, and also to remain vigilant until Federal deschedule.



the impression that Colorado has a casual stance, but this does not reflect reality.

When determining verbiage for any new legislation, always make sure you know whether your state is home rule and plan accordingly. Add protections for those patients in prohibitive areas!

Patients First!

- BE PREPARED FOR PUSHBACK!
- PROTECT YOUR PATIENTS!
- START NORMALIZATION THROUGH EDUCATION
- IMPROVE THE LOCAL COMMUNITY
- SAVE LIVES!

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Protecting Patients:

State Responses to Legalization



Patients in Colorado advocating for patient rights at the Colorado State capitol. Photo by Michelle Walker

“IT IS MUCH HARDER FOR AN ELECTED OFFICIAL TO VOTE AGAINST A PATIENT THEY HAVE DEVELOPED A RELATIONSHIP WITH, AND BRINGS THE HUMAN SIDE OF CANNABIS BACK INTO THE DEBATE.”

Any time you come out of prohibition, there will be pushback from law makers. **Make sure you put therapeutic cannabis access into your State Constitution.** Pushbacks come in all forms at the state level. Colorado legislature is looked at funding law enforcement for gray markets (patient networks), increasing labeling requirements, and possibly restricting assisted cultivation.

There have also been bills introduced to reduce potency, regulations to stifle patient grows, and to restrict caregivers. In addition, the opposition have been fighting tooth and nail over bills like Jack’s Law, that allow pediatric cannabis patients to take their medicine on school grounds.

State wide, media has been working with law enforcement and municipalities to paint “doomsday” pictures of medical marijuana.

Patients are being lumped in with organized crime and being projected as “lazy

stoners just wanting to get high”. The public is buying into this as well. To combat these pushbacks, your community must:

- **Reach out to every law maker and make sure there is patient interaction.** It is much harder for an elected official to vote against a patient they have developed a relationship with, and brings the human side of cannabis back into the debate. Patients are the **why** and that **why** gets lost very quickly after legislation is passed.
- **Begin education and don’t stop.** Prior to legalization, every state should have ongoing classes to educate the public about what medical marijuana is, and what patients face. To design and vote for programs that meet patient needs, the general public and law makers need to know what those needs are.
- **Keep the discussions patient oriented.** After legalization measures pass, be sure you maintain patient centered discussions with your local and state communities. Shortly after these policies are passed, the topic turns to the money surrounding cannabis cultivation, sales, and consumption.

CPRC of Colorado has ongoing education and curriculum to help get your state started. It is best to teach people about medical marijuana **before** your program starts to ease transitioning.

TAXES! TAXES! TAXES!

All legalization discussions will ultimately circle back to how much money in taxes/ fees a state can make. Even medical programs that start out to save lives, become beehives discussing money. It seems everyone wants a piece of marijuana whether it is medical or recreational.

By the time your elected officials use the “but we don’t make money off of that” argument, there have already been closed door discussions about how best to squeeze patients.

The lure of millions of dollars in tax revenue is too much for most municipalities, especially

when faced with struggling economies.

Know that these discussions are occurring in every state thinking about legalization, and be sure you keep your local entities in line! The more a person has a human connection to the issue, the better your chances of keeping compassionate care.



Navigating Legalization

Local Vigilance is Necessary

Locally, many areas of “legal” states have opted to stay away from anything cannabis. Hundreds of patients have moved from their homes with the expectations of being welcomed into an open and accepting community, only to find that isn’t the case.

Just because laws pass, doesn’t mean the stigma leaves. Laws can also be reversed. One of the strategies being employed in Colorado is getting local municipalities to restrict and regulate everything from the industry to the patient’s ability to cultivate their own medicine. Then these are presented to the state as measures that were “citizen approved”, when they were actually adopted by just a handful of people.

Be sure you have representatives in each county that will stay on top of legislation and report it back to a central, state-wide database.

Colorado has over 330

different sets of marijuana laws that are ever-changing. Without representatives in each area, these become lost and laws will regress.

- **Establish a state-wide network of patient representatives that will report potential changes in local cannabis laws.** This serves 2 purposes. It engages the local patient community and keeps everyone connected.
- **Keep residents up to date on legal issues and changes.** Most residents are not involved with their local governments and do not always know their rights are in jeopardy.
- **Provide ongoing patient education on how to use medical marijuana therapeutically.** Using phytocannabinoids as medicine is a very new concept for most people. Unfortunately, that

means that leaves patients applying recreational concepts.

- **Education, education, education.** The more citizens hear about the patient side of medical cannabis, the more accepting your local areas will be to having medical level access available. Also, the more educated your state’s population is, the harder it is to fool them with bad propaganda. Get out there and use some science based education to combat the stigma.
- **Do not compare medicine to alcohol.** That means never should medical marijuana be regulated as alcohol, else you will get into trouble.
- **Don’t share propaganda.** Verify all stories before sharing them, and don’t fall for propaganda, pro or anti.



“WITHOUT REPRESENTATIVES IN EACH AREA, THESE BECOME LOST AND LAWS WILL REGRESS.”

Read that Bill!

One of the biggest issues surrounding medical marijuana policy is citizen participation. Media tends to sum things up and put spin on policy, and completely distort the actual nature of the bill.

Patients and citizens generally do not spend time reading the actual wording and can miss out on things

like grow limits/bans, criminal penalties snuck into sections, zoning changes and restrictions making legal use impossible, limiting industry development, and even taking caregiver programs away.

It is important that no monopolies are established,

that legislation help improve the local economies, keeps access to cannabis open so medicine is affordable, fixes incarceration issues, and patients have state protected cultivation rights.

Any bills restricting these things are bad news, even if they are included with bills that seem to do “good”.





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Canna-Patient Resource Connection Mission



Canna Patient Resource Connection (CPRC) was formed to:

- Provide education to communities, businesses, and elected officials with intentions to improve the understanding of phytocannabinoid use as part of an overall treatment plan.
- Help break stigmas surrounding the therapeutic use of cannabis.
- To provide both educational and resource support to the cannabis patient population as the plant undergoes the harsh transition from an illegal drug to having accepted therapeutic and recreational uses.

Through collaboration with a variety of community entities, CPRC hopes to provide education that can save lives, help the therapeutic industry keep its patient needs in mind, and improve the lives of cannabis patients.



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Free Education for verifiable patient advocacy groups



Content Bundles Include

- Slideshow
- Sharable pdf of Slideshow
- Handout
- Annotated Teacher's Guide
- Social Media Graphics

Available Bundles

- Cannabis and Autoimmune Diseases
- Cannabis and Cancer
- Beginner Therapeutic Cannabis
- Know CBD
- Cannabinoids and Terpenes
- Protecting Patients

