

Hello,

I submit the attached letter for the public comment section of the February 13th CAC Medicinal Use Subcommittee meeting.

Thank you,
Debbie

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americansforsafeaccess.org

ASA is the largest national 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 150,000 supporters in all 50 states.

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February 11, 2023

Dear CAC Medicinal Use Subcommittee,

I appreciate the opportunity to address the Committee and am submitting this testimony on behalf of our members in California.

On February 3, 2023, our organization, Americans for Safe Access (ASA), released the ["2022 State of the States Report: An Analysis of Medical Cannabis Access in the United States"](#), a tool we create each year for policymakers to help evaluate the effectiveness of their state's cannabis program from a patient perspective. The report utilizes patient survey data as well as over 9,000 data points to assign grades to each state using a rubric that reflects the key issues affecting patient access. The categories include Patient Rights and Civil Protections, Access to Medicine, Affordability, Program Functionality, Health and Social Equity, and Consumer Protection and Product Safety.

This year California received a C+ grade. CA excelled in terms of cannabis reforms signed into law that will have a positive impact on patients statewide, including SB 1186 and AB 2188. However, because our scorecard analyzes state laws already in effect by the end of 2022, many of these bills were not accounted for in this year's scorecard, but will be in subsequent years when they go into effect. California was penalized for lacking urgency in which improvements are enacted. Patients have been waiting for improvements to the program for some time, and passing legislation does not do much to improve the patient experience until it is enacted.

Patients surveyed in California gave the state's medical cannabis program relatively positive reviews, with most responses indicating no change in access or increased access to medical cannabis over the last year. Many patients are satisfied with the number of convenient dispensaries, but many still believe that there are too few in their proximity. The negative feedback came predominantly from the lack of focus on medical cannabis due to the state's adult use/recreational market, leaving medical patients with limited inventory and higher prices. One survey response noted the lack of medicinal grade products available to purchase. Additionally, patients expressed frustration that dispensary products are overly focused on THC content to the detriment of more therapeutic chemical profiles.

In data we gather for this year's report we verified some alarming trend we have been hearing from patients and members in California for years; a drop in improvements in medical cannabis programs overall, disparity in product safety measures, and patients' needs being pushed behind those of the recreational/adult-use market and often forgotten.

We included a list of policy considerations, ***The Medical Cannabis Equity Checklist***, in the State of the States Report to help policymakers better serve the needs of patients in a dual cannabis marketplace. Some of these policies include:

- ✓ Remove Patient Registration Fees & Allow Multi-Year Registrations
- ✓ Remove Restrictive Caregiver Requirements & Remove Caregiver Registration Fees
- ✓ Exempt Medical Cannabis Products from Sales and Excise Taxes
- ✓ Exempt Medical Cannabis Supply Chain from Taxes
- ✓ Prioritize Patient Access & Medical Cannabis Product Inventory
- ✓ Expand and Prioritize Licensing for Medical Cannabis Businesses
- ✓ Expand Access to Independent Cannabis Testing Laboratories
- ✓ Create Proficiency Testing Programs for Cannabis Testing Laboratories
- ✓ Provide Full Reciprocity for Out-of-State Patients

We appreciate that states are not only tasked with creating the infrastructure for a supply chain that remains illegal at the federal level, but also balancing the requests of patients, cannabis businesses, and constituents including addressing a new health concern of the seemingly federally legal, unregulated cannabinoid market. While preparing this report, it was hard to overlook the immense amount of work that states have gone through over the years to create these medical cannabis programs, and the challenges still facing them.

We hope [this report](#) is a helpful tool for you in cannabis policy matters. Please let us know if there is anyway ASA can help the subcommittee improve the lives of patients.

Debbie Churgai



Executive Director
Americans for Safe Access