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March 16, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Cannabis Industry Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Dear Governor Newsom,

As you and your administration consider additional guidance and direction to contain the spread of COVID-19, we the undersigned cannabis licensees, associations and partners urge you to consider the therapeutic benefits of cannabis and the impact those benefits can have on a population that is increasingly and deeply anxious about the effect of the pandemic on their personal well-being.

As a leader on cannabis issues over the years, you more than most understand the medicinal value of cannabis. The range of medical conditions for which cannabis has demonstrated efficacy is broad, from epilepsy to schizophrenia to wasting syndrome. Beyond that, cannabis has proven its worth in controlling pain, reducing anxiety, curbing insomnia and improving appetite.

As our state's leader in this time of crisis, you have taken measured steps designed to maximize social distancing and protect all of our citizens, especially the most vulnerable, from exposure to this potentially fatal virus. Your very strong guidance on non-essential gatherings, bars, restaurants and social isolation is appropriately aimed at venues that are apt to bring many people into a limited amount of space.

We appreciate that Executive Orders issued on one day do not preempt the need for additional measures the next. We recognize that retailers are not generally subject to an Executive Order at this point. But we also recognize that could change tomorrow.

While retail is a legitimate industry to examine for possible social distancing guidance, we submit that as retail businesses, like pharmacies, that provide medicinal and therapeutic products to millions of Californians, licensed cannabis dispensaries should not be included in any future guidance or order to shut down. At a time that so many of our citizens need the products available through dispensaries to weather this pandemic, our continued availability to them is essential to their health and well-being.

At the same time, we recognize that we can do our part to respond to the need for social distancing. Our delivery services already contribute greatly to reducing the physical presence of customers in our storefront operations. In addition, some dispensaries have temporarily established curbside delivery services to further minimize the foot traffic in our stores. However, we are ready to work with you and the Bureau of Cannabis Control to explore other social distancing methods that allow Californians access to our vital products while keeping exposure possibilities to a minimum for both the public and our employees alike.

We look forward to further discussion on these points and appreciate your favorable consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Members and Partners, California's Legal Cannabis Industry

cc: Lori Ajax, Chief, Bureau of Cannabis Control
Mark Ghaly, Secretary, Health and Human Services Agency
Dr. Sonia Angell, Director, Department of Public Health