Compassionate Oregon Newsletter

March – April 2018

**Senate Bill 1544**

SB 1544, now waiting for the Governor’s signature, made some adjustments to the medical marijuana laws but original language was left on the cutting room floor. This session was the first session without the Joint Marijuana Regulation Committee and being a short session for cannabis, it was in a sense, over before it started. With no committee specifically dedicated to Cannabis law, bills had to work through the system in a normal manner.

This resulted in SB 1544, introduced by the Senate Judiciary Committee, being referred to and heard by the Senate Rules Committee chaired by Senator Ginny Burdick (D, Dist. – 18). OMMP registrants will be coming up against this Senator’s antiquated and misguided views of the Program even after her tenure as Co-chair of the Joint Marijuana Regulation Committee. As long as Sen. Burdick is Senate Majority Leader, this dynamic is not likely to change as she is in control of which committee a particular bill is referred to. This can make all the difference in the success of a bill as we experienced with HB 2128 the patient rights bill, during the 2015 session where referred to House Health Care Committee, it was never scheduled for a hearing even after three different promises to do so from Chair Greenlick.

The original bill called for two things, a redefinition of the ’12 plant rule’ and to allow OMMP growers into the OLCC processing loop. The ’12 plant rule’ under its current interpretation restricts any grow site where a patient lives and is growing for themselves, to 12 plants. The OMMP allows growers to transfer per a patient’s permission, cannabis to a processor and the processor can then transfer any processed products to a patient or their caregiver or to a dispensary where a patient or their caregiver may pick it up.

The short session is just that, short.

For 35 days, in this instance just 30 days after it started, legislators, agencies and lobbyists are in a frenzied state and most bills are pre-session filed and already have the votes lined up in the hopes of smooth sailing and quick passage. In the case of SB 1544, after House Bill 4110 was pronounced dead, - it was not considered good optics in light of the Sessions era to have trade shows handing out free samples, anything marijuana related was dumped into SB 1544. This was good and bad. We lost the two things we were originally asking for but did managed to extend the sunset dates for certain aspects of the Commission, deferred the limiting of immature plants thrown to rules to be worked through. The issue of OLCC transferring product back to a patient was also deferred to the Cannabis Commission for resolution. SB 1544 also now allows hemp products to be sold in OLCC stores but must meet all other product requirements including testing and packaging and labeling. It also allows that OMMP grow sites will not be considered commercial businesses for purposes of state rule. It does not preclude local jurisdictions from implementing their own ordinances and that OLCC producers may now sell starts to OMMP growers. It will also require 12-plant grow sites with more than two growers and two patients to report into the Cannabis Tracking System (CTS). This language was supposed to be two growers *or* two patients but the bill moved so fast in the last week this change was not adopted and will require legislation to change it. The concept was to require tracking for 12-plant grow sites with more than two patients or two growers to report into the CTS. This mistake precludes most 12-plant grows to circumvent the rule.

Also included in SB 1544 was the Illegal Marijuana Market Enforcement Grant Program which allows some of the tax revenue from retail sales to be redirected and made available for local law enforcement to respond to complaints against grow sites they cannot verify as either OLCC or OMMP grow sites or other illegal grows discovered by law enforcement.

The Oregon Medical Marijuana Program was designed to do two things, allow patients to grow cannabis for their own use and, allow patients that could not grow for themselves to designate another person to do it for them. The trend from the legislature is to remove this second leg of the program and reduce all patients to just growing for themselves and one other person such as a spouse or other family member or friend. It is the goal of our organization to reverse this trend and expand the OMMP to be able to facilitate any Oregonian that finds benefit from the use of Cannabis.

**Cannabis Commission**

The Oregon Cannabis Commission held its last meeting on Wednesday, March 21. The Commission heard from team leaders and how they want to proceed and who they would like help from. Anthony Taylor is the team leader for creating access for low and fixed-income patients and for streamlining and expanding the OMMP. To accomplish this he has asked for help from Andre Ourso and suggested team members, John Sajo, Anthony Johnson, Chelsea Hopkins and Todd Dalotto. It is hoped these folks will be willing to help. The outline for these goals was presented and reviewed by the other members of the Commission. People can find the Cannabis Commission’s activities at this link: <http://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/DISEASESCONDITIONS/CHRONICDISEASE/MEDICALMARIJUANAPROGRAM/Pages/Cannabis-Commission.aspx>.

It was revealed at the last meeting that OHA/OMMP will be conducting an Oregon tour to explain to OMMP growers the requirements of the reporting system and the importance of continuing to report through the, Oregon Medical Marijuana Online System (OMMOS). These update classes will be held around Oregon and will be preceded by notifications from OHA and media outreach so everyone knows when and where to go.

In addition to this OLCC will also be conducting their own tour to speak with OMMP growers to get them familiar with the system those growers with more than 12 plants will have to enter to continue providing for patients. Both agencies plan on doing these classes/updates/training from late April through the middle of June. The OHA will be accompanying the OLCC when they go out to discuss the METRC system.

Anthony Taylor will be joining both OHA and OLCC for some of their presentations. It should be noted that these tours will be conducted independently except for the joint appearances where OHA will be on hand to answer OMMP specific questions relating to METRC tracking.

**The 2019 session**

We have until September 21 2018, to have concepts submitted to Legislative Counsel for pre-session filing and the date we will be shooting for to have concepts ready to submit. These concepts must be submitted, by the Commission according to statute, to the Judiciary or Health Care committees. Compassionate Oregon is not constrained to what committees it can submit legislative concepts to or which member we can ask to submit legislation. It is important that we work with the Commission to advance our concepts but we will also be submitting additional legislative concepts as needed to cover gaps that may be in legislative concepts submitted by the Cannabis Commission.

Compassionate Oregon is dedicated to ensuring cannabis patients are not discriminated against for their medical use of cannabis in any way. It will be up to Compassionate Oregon as the only patient advocacy group still standing and it will be up to us to provide comprehensive education for legislators to help advance our agenda. This agenda will be worked out over the next few months.

The OHSU-VA cosponsored Clinical Cannabis for the Health Care Provider: Best Practices 2018, was held on March 17th on the OHSU campus. It covered the pharmacology of Cannabis, Potential benefits in selected populations including, Treatment of Chronic Pain and Insomnia, Symptom Management for MS, Potential Adverse Effects and Risks in selected Populations, The Cannabis Dispensary, Oregon and Washington medical and nursing board recommendations.

The historic class was well attended with more attendees than chairs. Some of the information presented as dated and inaccurate in some places but overall was a pretty good introductory course for those with no experience with cannabis or cannabis patients. We look forward to the next classes. To the credit of OHSU they offered table space for pro-cannabis businesses especially those catering to the needs of patients.

Next year’s classes are expected to be held at a venue that is more specifically cannabis friendly and larger to be able to accept more participants.

**Membership**

Compassionate Oregon has re-evaluated its membership program and will be presenting this at our next meeting. Changes will become effective April 1, 2018. The previous $35 yearly membership will now be upgraded to be sustaining memberships of $35/month. The upper membership tiers will not change much and the $35/year membership will still be available to students and employees or members of organizations that have sustaining memberships. Please visit our website at CompassionateOregon.org for further details.

We want to thank the over 1,100 folks that have liked our Facebook page and appreciate your support. Please keep watching for immediate updates or calls to action. We try to keep our webpage current but sometimes the amount of information out there especially new research can keep even the best website managers busy. We hope to keep it much more active and current. We have already taken steps to facilitate our ability to do this. Please stay tuned.