



Dear IRRC Board,

Thank you for allowing me to submit a comment. My name is Sarah Hassinger, and I am a pharmacist at a medical marijuana dispensary in Philadelphia. I have worked in the PA medical marijuana program for over four years. I joined this specific area of our profession because it combines my passions of helping patients and cannabis medicine. I have the privilege of helping patients manage their medical conditions and improve their quality of life using this amazing medicine. I put the utmost care and consideration into my patient recommendations based on the latest evidence-based information. I am a pharmacist first which means patients always come first, even if it's not easy to discuss. Sometimes I have the honor of helping patients find relief from their pain, and sometimes I have to have a difficult conversation with a patient because cannabis treatment might not be the best option for them or we have exhausted all existing options currently available in the PA market. However, regardless of what scenario it is, I am giving my most honest, experienced, and educated medical opinion to the patient. My goal is always to have the patient's best interest at the forefront. The following are my opinions and not the views of my employer.

Regarding the regulations from section 1161a25, "A dispensary authorized to operate more than one facility may allow the physician or pharmacist to rotate coverage to the secondary and tertiary dispensaries as opposed to being limited to covering the primary location," does not state the physician or pharmacist may *simultaneously* cover secondary and tertiary dispensaries, they may ROTATE coverage. This statement is currently being misinterpreted and abused by some big cannabis companies, who have also stated that medical professionals at dispensaries are "unnecessary barriers" to patients. That statement demonstrates their focus is exclusively on profit margins at the expense of patient care and is despicable. These same big cannabis companies laid off all but five pharmacists to cover 18 dispensary locations. Inversely, my workplace has not adopted these same policies, and I am incredibly grateful. They allow me to fulfill my purpose and help those in need. Not only do I inform my patients about the most impactful products based on their medical needs and personal preferences, but I also even assist patients at the dispensary with medical marijuana card renewal payments in order to help them access their medicine.

Healthcare professionals at the dispensary cannot give the same level of care when they are simultaneously covering more than one location. One location alone can have 600 patients a day which is 60 patients per hour, which does not even consider the lunch rush or after-work rush we often experience. If a healthcare professional is covering another busy location, they may easily check over 1,000 patient certifications. It is impossible to give patients the same

level of care and consideration when simultaneously covering multiple dispensaries, which should not be the standard in our program.

My suggestion would be to update the language to state, "Covering additional sites should be restricted to emergencies or the relief of another medical professional in the organization". This updated language allows us to assist another medical professional who might be covering a higher volume location who needs to assist a new, medically complicated patient who is requesting guidance, or to relieve the healthcare professional at another site for 30minutes so they can eat lunch. I understand staffing these particular specialists can be complicated, but this updated language allows flexibility while enforcing a 1:1 ratio of medical professionals to each dispensary. Medical professionals at the dispensary seek nothing but the best for their patients. They do not seek opportunities to take advantage of the free market enterprise. Please do not allow these owners/operators' pursuit of their own economic self-interest to compromise patient care or to dictate the rules/regulations for our medical patients in our medical program.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sarah Hassinger, PharmD