

Dr. Marcu's Testimony:

New Nationwide Certification Program Brings Quality Assurance to the Medical Marijuana Industry

Independent certification will benefit patients, healthcare providers, and regulators implementing medical marijuana laws

Washington, D.C. -- Patient advocacy group Americans for Safe Access (ASA) launched a new nationwide program that will certify the quality and reliability of medical marijuana products sold at licensed businesses. Patient Focused Certification (PFC) is the only nonprofit, third-party certification for the medical marijuana industry based on new quality standards issued by the American Herbal Products Association (AHPA) and the American Herbal Pharmacopeia (AHP).

Earlier this year, AHPA issued a series of recommendations for state regulators, providing standards for the medical marijuana industry in the areas of manufacturing, packaging and labeling, dispensary operations, and laboratory practices. AHPA has since issued standards for commercial medical marijuana products, as well as the reliability and quality of related services. More recently, AHP released a cannabis monograph that set standards for the plant's identity, purity, quality, and botanical properties.

"In every city I visit across this country, patients say product safety and quality assurance are the issues they care about," said ASA Executive Director Steph Sherer. "As a patient advocacy organization, it was a natural fit for Americans for Safe Access to fill this much needed gap," continued Sherer. "With our independent, third-party certification, patients, healthcare providers, and regulators will be able to depend on reliable, high-quality medical marijuana products and services."

With more than one million qualified medical marijuana patients in 20 states and the District of Columbia, a new industry has developed to meet the needs of this rapidly growing population. Many states and localities have created regulations to govern the location, size, taxation, and even the ownership and management of the businesses and organizations that serve patients. PFC can now ensure adherence to the regulatory guidelines AHPA and AHP have established for the purity and identity of the products being sold and the methods for producing and distributing them.

"The Patient Focused Certification program is long overdue. Patients deserve to know that the products they receive are of the highest standard," said Sebastopol Mayor Robert Jacob. "As director of two medical cannabis dispensaries, SPARC and Peace in Medicine, I am excited that patients will be better informed when they choose where to get their medicine," continued Mayor Jacob. "As Mayor of Sebastopol, I am relieved to know that there are product safety standards established by a trusted national organization to help guide local governments."

ASA has been offering trainings to the medical marijuana industry for over a decade and holds a permit from the District of Columbia for mandatory industry trainings. PFC industry trainings are co-produced with the [Cannabis Training Institute](#) (CTI) and will certify cultivators, manufacturers, distributors, and laboratory technicians to ensure adherence to AHPA and AHP

standards. Such trainings are mandatory in some states, including Arizona, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Nevada, and the District of Columbia, but not in others. Following a successful beta phase over the past few months, the program is now available to the medical cannabis industry in all 20 states and the District of Columbia.

"The PFC program is exceptionally important in the absence of state regulations which require mandatory testing," said Jeffrey C. Raber, Ph.D., President of The Werc Shop, Inc., one of the analytic laboratories certified in the beta phase. "We're exceptionally proud to be a part of this forward-looking program which is establishing excellent standards of operations across all organizations involved in the medical cannabis supply chain."

The certification process, which is overseen by a review board of scientists, doctors, and industry and regulatory experts, includes a scheduled physical audit, a staff training audit, a complaint process and at least one surprise audit annually. PFC-certified products and businesses will exhibit the PFC seal on their marketing, promotions and packaging to help patients make educated purchasing decisions. Pending certifications in six states include: Harvest of Tempe, Arizona; Berkeley Patients Group, SPARC, and BASA in California; Werc Shop Laboratories in California and Washington; Cannalabs in Colorado, Remedy in Maine; New Mexicann and Page Analytics in New Mexico; and Dockside and CPC in Washington.

"The PFC program is the first of its kind in the medical marijuana industry, and it is a vital step in bringing additional credibility to an industry with laws and regulations that vary by state," said Steve White with Harvest of Tempe. "Now patients have a resource that bridges those state-by-state differences."

Other nationally recognized independent certification programs include the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), Good Housekeeping, Snell Foundation (helmets), and the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF).