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Medical Marijuana Patient Support • PO Box 1716, El Cerrito CA 94530 • 510-215-8326

Summer, 2002

Dear DA or County Supervisor

I am writing to you about a matter that deeply concerns both of us. Since the 1996 passage of Proposition 215, the medical marijuana law, California's counties have been struggling with the key question left unresolved in the measure: How can anyone tell if a cannabis garden is reasonably related to the medical needs of a patient?

This question is made difficult by several variables. 1) Every garden is a bit different. 2) Grown outdoors, even a few big cannabis plants can produce large amounts of bud. 3) Many indoor gardens use a "Sea of Green" method involving scores or even hundreds of tiny plants. 4) Different growers get different yields while using the same techniques.

While law enforcement attempts to limit garden size to a very few plants, an exceptional grower can still produce many pounds by growing gigantic plants. At the same time, juries statewide are acquitting patients arrested with hundreds of plants and multiple pounds of processed bud. Such a trial can generate lots of bad publicity, send a mixed message to the community about your leadership, and cost the county more than \$100,000.

What can local officials do? The county of Sonoma grappled with this question. First it took a hard-line position, aggressively arresting and prosecuting patients, only to find that it had wasted valuable public money and resources. In the course of fighting these cases, however, DA Michael Mullins came to an important conclusion: There is a scientific method that allows patients to grow in any planting variation they wish, indoor or out, and still makes it easy for police to gauge the likely output. It is a cannabis yield formula that was developed and published in 1992 by the US Drug Enforcement Administration.

The result of that discovery (and additional work with patients in SAMM, the Sonoma Alliance for Medical Marijuana) was the development of the "Sonoma Guidelines," a copy of which is attached. Put simply, 100 square feet of garden canopy will typically produce three pounds of usable cannabis bud per year, a common amount used by chronic dosage patients. The guidelines allow up to 100 square feet and three pounds of processed bud per

patient per year. This gives patients wide latitude, and the only thing that a field officer needs is a tape measure to check if a garden is in compliance. Any excess can either be confiscated or spared, if the patient has a written statement from a physician stipulating that they require more than the guidelines provide. One additional restriction they adopted is to limit patients to less than 100 plants each, so as to keep the quantity below the federal enforcement threshold. You may wish to consider that as a practical concern, but it is not essential to the canopy formula, so counting plants is never required.

This system is so simple, and yet it works! It allows patients to grow an adequate supply for their personal need, indoor or out, but it restricts even the most prolific grower. For example, if a patient decides to grow larger plants, they need to reduce the number of plants so as not to exceed the 100 square foot limit. Remember, that figure is a maximum amount; some patients may use less space, depending on their need and skill levels. These guidelines eliminate the need to train officers on how to calculate individual garden yields, distinguish between male or female and vegetative or flowering plants, determine what part of the crop is usable, assess patient needs, or interpret various modes of consumption, processing and storage. No method is perfect, but anybody with a tape measure and calculator can use these guidelines, so they protect a substantial majority of patients' needs.

Patients across the state have endorsed the garden evaluation portion of these medical marijuana guidelines as being safe and effective. The Sonoma DA's office is proud of its program and has offered to help other counties adopt it. I urge you to discuss this with Mr. Mullins, and I offer my assistance as a court-qualified cannabis expert.

The attached materials include a copy of the guidelines, with contact information for the DA's office, as well as my curriculum vitae. Please do not hesitate to contact me for further information or supporting documents.

Thanks for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Conrad', enclosed within a large, loopy circular flourish.

Chris Conrad, *Safe Access Now!*