

For Immediate Release:

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BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) has been meeting regularly to take steps towards implementation of Measure 5, otherwise known as the Compassionate Care Act, which was recently approved by North Dakota residents. The measure will legalize marijuana use for qualifying patients suffering from certain medical conditions. Qualifying patients will be able to obtain marijuana for medical use through a network of designated caregivers and dispensaries, known as compassion centers. The Compassionate Care Act places the registration, licensing, regulation and enforcement functions with the NDDoH.

Under North Dakota Century Code, Measure 5 becomes state law 30 days after the date of the election. Since the measure passed, the NDDoH has been meeting regularly to develop an action plan and take steps towards implementation. This will not mean, however, that qualifying patients will be able to obtain marijuana for medical use immediately.

The NDDoH is reviewing alternatives to pay for startup costs that will be incurred in the current and upcoming budget periods. Funding is required to provide:

- Staff to develop systems to register all qualifying patients and license designated caregivers and compassion centers as required by the new law
- Staff to provide monitoring and enforcement activities consistent with the law
- An adequate information management system for tracking data required to be reported annually and a verification system for law enforcement and caregivers to verify registration of qualified patients as required by the law
- Office equipment, office space, and other operating expenses

The NDDoH is seeking legal guidance to provide clarity to address conflicting provisions in the measure and further define terms, while still protecting the integrity of the measure approved by the voters.

The NDDoH is receiving many calls from the public for information. The department will be posting additional information to the department's website at ndhealth.gov as soon as it becomes available. In the meantime, callers are being referred to particular pages of the measure itself to allow interested individuals to obtain information on the requirements to become a qualifying patient, designated caregiver or compassion center.

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The North Dakota Department of Health is prohibited from providing legal advice to members of the public. For legal advice and assistance, members of the public will need to consult an attorney in private practice. Interested individuals should remember that marijuana importation, manufacture, distribution, and possession for any purpose is still illegal under federal law.

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