



## **DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

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### **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **MEDICAL MARIJUANA DISPENSARY LICENSEE SELECTION CONTINUES WITH CHANGE IN SELECTION PANEL AND START OF FINGERPRINT BACKGROUND CHECKS**

HONOLULU – The Hawaii State Department of Health is preparing for the selection of the first licensees for the Medical Marijuana Dispensary Program by next week Friday. In the interest of full disclosure and transparency, the Department is notifying the applicants and the public of some recent developments.

First, one of the panel members was unable to fully participate in the selection, and his scoring will not be included. Peggy Leong, Supervisor of the Medical Marijuana Dispensary Licensing Program explained, "It has just recently come to my attention that Dr. John Fisher, through no fault on his part, was not able to continue with his review. I'm not at liberty to share more details, in the interest of Dr. Fisher's privacy. We thank him for his time and assistance to date and wish him well."

The review and selection of the applicants will continue with the remaining four panel members. "We believe the review will be sufficiently rigorous with the remaining four members of the panel," said Director of Health, Dr. Virginia Pressler.

In addition, the Department has encountered delays related to the required fingerprinting and background checks of the applicants. This has resulted in a notice last night to the applicants to submit their fingerprints through the contracted service provider, Fieldprint, by next week Tuesday in order for the Department to complete the mandatory review of the applications by the Friday deadline.

Leong explained, "The process to select licensees involves coordination of several complex systems that required multiple levels of testing, including the fingerprinting and background checks. The applicants were aware from the start that this was a requirement and we appreciate their cooperation and efforts in complying as quickly as possible. We know that this is not an ideal situation for them, but if the applicants are not able to comply with the short turnaround time, or the Department is unable to review the background check results when they are received, we may need to wait to announce the final selection."

Pressler added, "We knew from the start that the timelines in the statute were very tight, but we were committed to doing our best to meet them, and so far we have been able to do so. We are pushing ahead with the selection and doing everything possible to make the announcement by the April 15 deadline set out in the statute. But we would rather have a good result than release the names prematurely just to meet an arbitrary deadline."

The medical marijuana dispensary law, Chapter 329D, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), allows DOH to award a total of eight licenses initially: three licenses for the City and County of Honolulu, two dispensary licenses each for the County of Hawaii and the County of Maui, and one dispensary license for the County of Kauai. Each dispensary licensee will be allowed to operate up to two production centers and two retail-dispensing locations.

For more information about the Medical Marijuana Dispensary Program, go to <http://health.hawaii.gov/medicalmarijuana/>.