



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
P. O. BOX 3378  
HONOLULU, HI 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:  
File:

February 26, 2021

Dear [REDACTED]

Subject: Denial of Petition to Add Depression as a Qualifying Condition for the Medical Use of Cannabis in the State of Hawaii

This letter is in response to the petition that was originally submitted on April 24, 2020 and resubmitted with revisions on April 30, 2020, requesting the addition of depression as a qualifying condition for the medical use of cannabis in the State of Hawaii. The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) reviewed your petition and found that it met the requirements, as specified in HAR § 11-160-7, for DOH to consider adding depression as a qualifying medical condition.

In addition to reviewing your submission, DOH considered public testimony, laws and policies of medical cannabis programs in other parts of the country, and assessed the results of a comprehensive medical literature review related to medical cannabis and depression disorder as defined by Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (DSM-V). DOH finds that:

- All written and oral testimony submitted during the public hearing process was supportive of adding depression as a qualifying medical condition;
- Of all the states and U.S. jurisdictions permitting medical cannabis, only one area under US jurisdiction, Puerto Rico, currently recognizes depression disorder as a qualifying medical condition. The medical cannabis states with available information have either denied or voted against adding the condition to their approved state list, or formal decisions are still unknown;
- A review of the available peer-review scientific evidence found insufficient evidence to support the safety and efficacy of any cannabis formulation for the treatment of depression defined by the DSM-V.

After investigation and careful consideration of the available information, DOH has determined that, cannabis may not be effective for people diagnosed with depression as defined by the DSM-V. Although there is mixed evidence to support the safety and efficacy of various cannabis doses in adults for the treatment of depressive symptoms associated with an underlying pain condition, the studies emphasize the need more research before conclusions can be made.

██████████  
Re: Petition Denial of Petition to Add Depression as a Qualifying Condition for the Medical Use  
of Cannabis in the State of Hawaii

Page 2

February 26, 2021

The petition to add depression is denied. The decision to deny adding depression as defined  
by the DSM-V as a qualifying debilitating medical condition for the use of cannabis in the state  
of Hawaii is the final agency action.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth A. Char, M.D.  
Director of Health