

Medical Marijuana –

Late last Friday the New Mexico Department of Health released proposed rule changes governing the medical cannabis program that are very concerning. If the new rules are adopted, thousands of patients, many of whom are New Mexico's Military Veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and chronic pain, are worried that their medical cannabis will be taken away by making it harder for them to access their medicine.

In addition to the decrease in the number of plants patients are allowed to grow and the introduction of a patient fee and background checks, advocates and patients are also concerned that rule changes: eliminate the requirement for the Program to conduct their annual assessment of services provided to patients; eliminate a primary caregiver's ability to grow medicine; and, institute an unworkable 24 hour timeframe that would make courier services obsolete for people living in remote areas.

Drug Policy Alliance respectfully requests the members of LHHS to consider signing onto a letter asking the Department to postpone the hearing, go back to the drawing board, and include stakeholders in their process, including the program's very own Medical Advisory Board members, who also were not consulted with prior to the release of the proposed rule changes.

Overdose Prevention –

For decades New Mexico has led the nation in overdose prevention – allowing the access of the overdose reversal drug nalcron to be administered by laypersons and being the first in the nation to pass the 911/Good Samaritan Law. But sadly, NM continues to have one of the highest overdose deaths rates in the country. For the past two years, appropriations to expand access to nalcron and overdose prevention efforts have been introduced but never have made it into the final budget.

Time is not on our side – overdose is a public health emergency in New Mexico and should be recognized as such. Just this year, Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick declared a public health emergency in his state to combat the growing abuse of opiates. What will it take for NM to do the same? NM's drug overdose death rate is more than 2 times that of Massachusetts.

Drug Policy Alliance respectfully asks the members of LHHS to make overdose prevention a critical priority during this interim session, introducing significant legislation to expand access to nalcron and consider cutting edge prevention programs, and ask the Governor to declare a public health emergency in New Mexico.