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THE TRUE HIGHS of Medical Cannabis

As Marijuana Moves Closer to Widespread Availability In Maryland, Its Legalization Offers Hope for the Sick and Opportunity for Investors

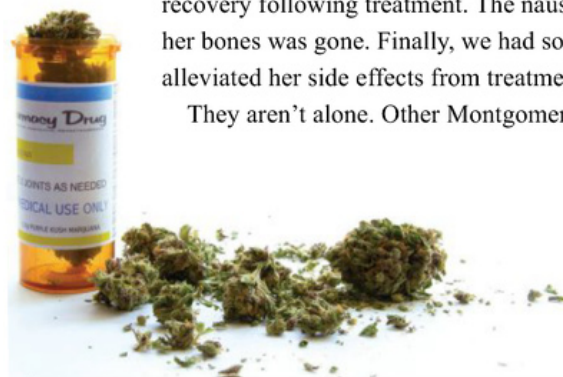
By Carolee Noury // Photograph by Bill Kamenjar

Witnessing your child suffer through unbearable pain changes you, as Sterling and Florence Crockett know. Staunch supporters of legal medical cannabis (the medical community's preferred term for medical marijuana), the Crocketts were devastated by their daughter's diagnosis of cancer on the heels of the news that she was expecting her first child.

"Actually seeing our daughter in pain, in bed for days under the covers, the look on her face and in her eyes was more frightening and heartbreaking than we'd imagined. The numerous medications she received to ease the side effects of her treatment barely did anything to relieve her discomfort. We had to do something. After having a few bites of the edible cannabis we gave her, our daughter was smiling again, she was able to hold and play with her daughter, who was an infant at the time, and she started to join the family for meals and conversation. Finally, there was some hope in her recovery following treatment. The nausea was gone, the ache in her bones was gone. Finally, we had something that better alleviated her side effects from treatment," says Florence.

They aren't alone. Other Montgomery County area applicants

for licenses from the
Natalie M. LaPrade
Maryland Medical
Cannabis Commission
(MMCC) have similar



STERLING AND FLORENCE CROCKETT BECAME SUPPORTERS AND INVESTORS IN MEDICAL CANNABIS AFTER SEEING THE POSITIVE EFFECTS IT HAD ON THEIR DAUGHTER WHO WAS SUFFERING FROM CANCER.

stories. Stephanie Reifkind Kahn, president of the Takoma Wellness Center – a dispensary in D.C. and license applicant for Montgomery County – watched her parents tackle life with the symptoms of cancer and multiple sclerosis (her mother and father, respectively) and the side effects of treatment. Physicians recommended marijuana for relief from their suffering, but it wasn't legally available until after their deaths.

Rabbi Jeffrey Kahn, co-owner of Takoma Wellness Center, has experienced the magic of offering this life-changing treatment. "We are able to help more than 1,000 people access medicine that changes their lives for the better; medicine totally inaccessible to them without our help," he says.

Darrell Carrington, executive director of the Maryland Cannabis Industry Association, an organization he says was started "out of the need for a unified voice to represent the emerging industry" agrees.

"The medical cannabis program will allow patients to have reliable, safe and secure access to the medicine they need. This will positively impact their health and wellbeing while hopefully cutting into the black market that many patients are forced to use at the moment."

As for the business specifics, there is optimism and excitement. Sterling Crockett, who is also an investor and partner with GTI-Maryland, a license applicant in several counties, projects a significant impact on the economy. "This effort is expected to bring a \$12 million boost to the state and create up to 200 jobs in the community," he says.

According to Larisa Bolivar, executive director of the Cannabis Consumers Coalition, Maryland's program has some specific advantages over peer states. "There are three significant ways in which Maryland's laws are unique in comparison to other states with legal medical cannabis. First, the law allows for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as a qualifying condition, which only nine other states allow. Second, patients from other states can register with (MMCC). Third, businesses and entrepreneurs from other states were allowed to apply for medical cannabis business licenses."

This also makes it an excellent venture to invest in. "Colorado made nearly a billion dollars in 2015 from medical and recreational sales, so the market is huge. This is not even counting the ancillary markets, such as consulting, marketing and delivery services. And, there



THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT MEDICAL CANNABIS IN MARYLAND

Active chemicals in marijuana: Cannabinoids

Primary cannabinoids in medical cannabis:

THC (marijuana's primary mind-altering component) is known to increase appetite and decrease nausea;

CBD/cannabidiol (not known to affect mind or behavior) can reduce pain and swelling, control epileptic seizures and decrease anxiety

Medical cannabis is prescribed to treat: Anxiety, depression, prevent nausea caused by chemotherapy; help HIV patients regain appetite; reduce seizures associated with epilepsy; alleviate chronic pain, alleviate tremors, muscle spasms and pain of multiple sclerosis.

Administered via: Extracts, lotions, ointments, tinctures, or through vaporization

How to obtain a medical cannabis card (for patients or caregivers):

Any physician in good standing in Maryland is eligible to register with MMCC. Registered physicians issue certifications for patients with whom they have a "bona fide physician-patient relationship" and believe would benefit from medical cannabis. The physician registers the certification on MMCC's website. mmcc.maryland.gov

are also wholesale products providers, such as those who provide child-resistant containers. It is quite lucrative," Bolivar says.

She, too, has direct experience with the importance of this medicine. "I moved to Colorado as a medical cannabis refugee from Northern Virginia in 2001 when the state's legal cannabis laws were implemented and immediately became involved in helping to develop safe access for patients, which in turn led to me opening the first dispensary in the state in 2004. Founding the Cannabis Consumers Coalition in 2014 seemed to be a natural evolution in ensuring that all cannabis consumers



"The medical cannabis program will allow patients to have reliable, safe and secure access to the medicine they need."

— Darrell Carrington, Maryland Cannabis Industry Association


receive fair treatment on behalf of the new industry and lawmakers."

Legal medical cannabis is expected to be available to registered patients in late 2016 or early 2017. This is later than first hoped and largely due to the high number of license applications: 146 applications for the 15 grower licenses allowed; 124 applications for the unlimited number of processor licenses; and 811 applications for a maximum of 94 dispensaries in the state (up to two in each of the state senatorial districts, which means a maximum of 16 in Montgomery County).

Carrington provides insight into some of the behind-the-scenes workings that have positioned Maryland's program for success. "Our law and regulations were crafted with input from many sectors, including patients, doctors, caregivers, advocates, industry leaders and nonprofits. It has taken longer than we had hoped to get medicine in the hands of patients who have already waited far too long, but we believe Maryland is poised to have one of the best programs in the country," he says.

His organization has worked in partnership with MMCC to ensure those patients will be heard. "Over the past two years, we have partnered with MMCC to conduct the first physician trainings as well as working on bills in Annapolis and at the county level to advance the medical cannabis program and advocate for policies that will benefit our patients," he adds.

Sterling and Florence Crockett were delighted to invest in GTI-Maryland's plans for the medical cannabis industry in Maryland because of their too-frequent experience of witnessing family members and friends suffer from treatable ailments.

"Having seen firsthand the suffering that is attached to these diseases, and in my daughter's case the relief cannabis provided, I believe compassion needs to be present and influence every decision as the medical cannabis industry begins to take form in Maryland," says Sterling. 



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