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Let's Be Blunt with Governor Christie!

The *New Jersey Compassionate Use Medical Marijuana Act* (“CUMMA”) deems medical marijuana to be “*medicine*” – based on proven, scientific and medical research. While the new law will literally benefit the lives of thousands of New Jersey patients (and their families and loved ones), it is also the strictest medical-marijuana law in the country. Under the law, a very *limited* number of patient illnesses/conditions are included for medical-marijuana treatment. In addition, after receiving a physician’s “certification” for medical-marijuana use in accordance with CUMMA, “qualified” patients are then allowed to register with only a single Alternative Treatment Center (ATC), and the patient must then purchase all of his/her medical marijuana at that single location. Moreover, unlike the other 13 states that have decriminalized medical marijuana, **the New Jersey law does not allow a medical-marijuana patient to grow even the smallest amount of the medicine on their own** (such growing-activity is still criminal and illegal in New Jersey, even by a medical-marijuana “qualified,” patient with a certification from a doctor . . .).

In sum, *New Jersey has enacted in CUMMA the most restrictive medical-marijuana program in the entire country*. (Hey, it aint perfect and CompassionAssociates.org is looking to expand the law’s reach, but we will take it!) However, while campaigning for office, Governor Christie publicly stated many times, on record, that he vehemently opposed CUMMA because “*it was too lax.*” Governor Christie’s opinion aside, after both the New Jersey Senate and Assembly separately debated, voted on, and passed CUMMA, it was signed into **LAW** by then-Governor Corzine.

CUMMA states that the first six ATCs in New Jersey will be non-profit, with two located in the northern region, two located in the central region, and two located in the southern region of New Jersey. After the initial six, other ATCs may be for profit or non-profit.

Governor Christie has now decided to attack CUMMA a different way (effectively acting as both the executive, legislature, and judiciary branches of the New Jersey government), by looking to abandon and overlook the actual, specific text of the law itself – and have all medical marijuana under the entire state’s medical-



marijuana program produced and distributed by Rutgers University.

Why? Right off the bat, something seems wrong with the government having a sweeping “oligopoly” related to the production and sale of medicine to its citizens. All other medicine we take (including the hardest of legal, pharmaceutical drugs that exist for patients) is produced by outside medical companies, and then distributed to patients through pharmacies. There is no direct government control of or involvement in that medical-distribution and sale process. Free trade allows for the best medicine and for continuous research and betterment of techniques. *What is the difference with medical-marijuana? Why does the government have to get involved in that single medicine?* The governmental, negative-stigma attached to medical marijuana must end! (can’t y’all read – the text of the New Jersey LAW itself explicitly deems marijuana for patients with certain medical-conditions to be “**medicine**” . . .) And forgetting the endless Constitutional, Due Process and many other legal challenges to Governor Christie’s “Rutgers Oligopoly,” the concept is also seriously flawed at its root.

Under this idea, through Rutgers, the government would be responsible for all production and sale of medical marijuana in New Jersey; Rutgers would transport the medical-marijuana to hospitals across the State of New Jersey; and then hospitals would both sell and administer the medicine to patients. Here are some of the obvious flaws with the Governor’s approach:

Access: Growing, flowering, and harvesting medical marijuana is an intense, very-precise, time-consuming process that must be done *correctly*. Since medical-marijuana is “God’s creation,” there exist many problems “in nature” that can possibly ruin an entire crop of medical marijuana (including insects, plant disease, contaminated water, poor air-circulation, and biological issues, to name a few). Thus, by having Rutgers handle the production and distribution of all of the medical-marijuana medicine for the entire State of New Jersey, if there was – “God forbid” – any sort of natural problem or any other situation that ruined Rutgers’ crop (for example, theft, fire, electrical issues, air-control problems, vandalism, strike by employees, or terrorism, to name a few), “qualified,” medical-marijuana patients would be at risk to be left with no medicine. *Should terminally-ill and suffering patients be forced to bear this risk?*

Costs: The other states which have already decriminalized medical marijuana have allowed and authorized non-profit and for-profit ATCs to handle the production and distribution of medical marijuana because there are private experts in the field who are best equipped to set up these growing facilities and



also because such a diversified system allows private individuals to pay all costs associated with employing the system, and the State to immediately begin collecting sales tax on medical-marijuana sales when they begin. Governor Christie's suggestion does not take advantage of these efficiencies. *How much money would it cost to train the Rutgers employees to handle this massive operation for the entire state (including the production and baking of all edible-based medical-marijuana products for the entire state) and then transport this medicine to hospitals across the entire State of New Jersey every day? Would the New Jersey State Police be required to accompany every one of these deliveries? (that's ALOT of overtime . . .) And the staff of hospitals must also be trained to handle their end of the process. How much will that training and maintenance – at every, single State hospital – cost? **Isn't New Jersey broke?** Should the New Jersey taxpayers be forced to bear this burden?*

Safety: Individual ATCs would be required to install high-tech, extensive security systems to receive licensing from the State. These complex security measures would of course be designed to prevent outside theft, in addition to employee theft. By contrast, under the Governor's Rutgers-concept: (i) many, many different Rutgers employees would be involved in the process and in contact with medical marijuana; (ii) there would literally be transports of medical marijuana coming out of Rutgers every day, going to hospitals across the whole state (so there would be massive quantities of medical marijuana, in specific vehicles, on the New Jersey state-roads each day); (iii) medical-marijuana shipments would presumably be transported by State employees, who would be in contact with the medical-marijuana supply; and (iv) at hospitals across the State, many, many hospital employees would be involved in the process and in contact with medical marijuana. By allowing so many hands across the State into New Jersey's "medical-marijuana cookie jar," there is ample room for theft at every interval along the way. Individual ATCs are much better suited to establish effective safety measures at their own locations, using high-tech security firms and techniques. *Should the public be forced to bear this risk?*

Hospitals Are Jammed Already: Have you ever gone to a New Jersey State Hospital emergency room? You better bring pajamas and a tooth brush . . . The hospitals in New Jersey are so overcrowded all ready – and underfunded – that the doctors, nurses and staff members at these facilities don't know where to turn or what to do, as it is. Now, under the Governor's approach, these hospitals are also going to be in charge of storing and selling medical marijuana to patients across the entire state. *Does that possibly seem like the best use of our limited, available medical-resources?* I would much rather see the hospitals in New



Jersey concentrate on sick and dying persons, rather than spending their valuable time and resources working as medical-marijuana pharmacies. *Should the ill be forced to bear this risk?*

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Compassion Associates is a New Jersey-based, not-for-profit organization which was founded by individuals who are concerned for patients in New Jersey who will benefit from the legal, medicinal use of marijuana. The organization's founders include Bradley Mann, a long-time New Jersey resident who himself suffers from Multiple Sclerosis. The organization was formed to help ensure that – where medical marijuana is deemed legal (including New Jersey) – no person who could benefit from the medicinal use of marijuana is left out, so that no person needlessly suffers; thus, our Group's slogan: **"People Helping People Feel Better"**. . . .For more information, visit <http://www.CompassionAssociates.org>