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KINGSTON, JAMAICA



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Licensed Retail Herb Houses Can Now Sell to Qualified Patients Online

The Cannabis Licensing Authority (CLA) has established interim measures to facilitate online sales by licensed retail herb houses to registered patients. This is in support of the Government of Jamaica's initiatives to keep Jamaicans safe whilst ensuring business continuity amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the context of the Disaster Risk Management (Enforcement Measures) Orders relative to the COVID-19 pandemic, herb houses may be deemed a business that offers retail services for the provision of medicine. As such, any exemptions given to these retail services under these Orders may be considered applicable to retail herb houses.

Highlighting the possible effects of the virus on the industry, Director of Enforcement and Monitoring, Faith Graham said, the CLA is, "cognizant of the far-reaching effects of the pandemic and remains vigilant and proactive in taking steps to secure the industry".

In consultation with the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, the CLA has formulated guidelines that facilitate the online sale of ganja to qualified patients, and the subsequent pick up of the ganja at licensed retail facilities. The established interim protocol provides an option to minimise the length of time spent in such licensed facilities thereby limiting the exposure of staff and patients alike.

The interim protocol permits herb houses, which sell ganja for medical and therapeutic purposes, to now do so online after meeting certain requirements established by the Authority.

To purchase ganja online from a herb house, patients must have previously visited the herb house and must have registered with the said herb house. Such registered patients would have provided government-issued photo identification and a valid prescription or written recommendation issued by a registered medical practitioner, as is normally required for the purchase of ganja by persons ordinarily resident in Jamaica. Under the interim protocol, licensees are required to provide these documents to the CLA at stipulated intervals.

Whilst responding to the restrictions presented by COVID-19, the Authority remains focused on compliance within the medical cannabis industry and the tracking and tracing of medical ganja. For this reason, licensees are also required to submit reports and inventory to the CLA in accordance with the required standards and within stipulated timelines.

The interim measures for online sales/purchases form only a part of the CLA's business continuity response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of its Business Continuity Plan, the CLA is also capitalising on its remote monitoring facilities to monitor harvests and other medical cannabis operations in Jamaica. This is to allow for the continuity of activities on licensed sites, which is necessary for the sustainable development of the industry, whilst ensuring compliance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Declaring its commitment to protecting the local cannabis industry during the global COVID-19 pandemic, Chief Executive Officer of the CLA, Lincoln Allen says, “the Authority remains functional and committed to meeting the needs of the industry.”

Other aspects of the Authority’s Business Continuity Plan include a Restricted Visitor Policy, online meetings to facilitate the application processes and implementation of a lobby dropbox for the receipt of documents. Among other things, the CLA requests that clients and potential clients set appointments before visiting its offices.

The CLA continues to keep abreast of Government advisories and makes appropriate adjustments, where necessary, to allow for the preservation of the integrity and continuity of Jamaica’s medical cannabis industry.

###END###

Notes to Editors:

About the Cannabis Licensing Authority: The CLA, which was created by the Dangerous Drug Act, has powers to make and enforce regulations for licences, permits and authorisations for the cultivation, processing, distribution, sale and transportation of ganja, for medical scientific and therapeutic purposes.

About Jamaica’s UN Drug Treaty Obligation: Parties to the 1961 Single Convention undertake to limit the production, manufacture, export, import, distribution and stocks of, trade-in and use and possession of the controlled drugs so that they are used exclusively for medical and scientific purposes. The production and distribution of controlled substances must be licensed and supervised.

Interviews: Available on request

Images: n/a

Website: www.cla.org.jm

Social Media: Facebook: facebook.com/TheCannabisLicensingAuthority

Twitter: twitter.com/cla_jamaica

LinkedIn: linkedin.com/company/cannabislicensingauthority

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