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Natalie M. LaPrade Maryland Medical Cannabis Commission Announces Revised Scoring Timeline for Grower and Processor License Applications

BALTIMORE (Dec. 21, 2015) – The Natalie M. LaPrade Maryland Medical Cannabis Commission (MMCC) today announced its revised review and scoring timeline for the 146 grower license applications and 124 processor license applications it received by the November 6 deadline. An updated schedule for the scoring of 811 dispensary license applications will be forthcoming.

“Before medicine can be dispensed, it has to be grown, processed, tested and packaged,” said MMCC Executive Director Hannah Byron. “Therefore, we will first issue Stage One approvals for grower and processor licenses, with Stage One approval for dispensary licenses to follow. This sequential approach mirrors the operational needs of the program and represents the most efficient means of processing each category of application.”

Under the updated timeline, the Commission anticipates issuing Stage One approvals for grower and processor applicants by summer 2016. The schedule for Stage One approval of dispensary applicants will be announced in the near future.

Many seeking dispensary licenses submitted applications for multiple senatorial districts. As a result, a meaningful percentage of the 811 total dispensary applications received are not materially different from one another. The Commission is in contact with applicants who filed for dispensary licenses in multiple jurisdictions to determine the final number of unique dispensary applications that must be reviewed and scored.

The Commission anticipates having the final number of unique dispensary applications that must be evaluated in January, at which time a notification timeline will be announced regarding dispensary applications.

Once applicants receive Stage One approval from the Commission, they can immediately begin fulfilling any outstanding requirements for formal licensure and final inspection by the Commission. While Stage One awardees have 365 days to meet any outstanding obligations, it is anticipated some applicants will do so in advance of the deadline.

Among the steps applicants may have to complete to secure final licensing are raising capital, acquiring real estate, securing local zoning approvals, construction of facilities, installation of equipment and systems and the hiring and training of staff. Applicants with ready access to capital or already in possession of adequate real estate, for example, may be in a position to complete the licensing process much more quickly.

“Based on published news reports, it appears many applicants have already begun preparing for the final stage of the licensing process,” said MMCC Chairman Dr. Paul W. Davies. “This proactive approach on the part of applicants certainly will help expedite the program’s rollout schedule so that Maryland patients can begin receiving medicine at the earliest possible date.”

The Commission has worked with Towson University’s Regional Economic Studies Institute (RESI) to develop the revised timeline for the review and scoring of applications. RESI has been commissioned by MMCC to conduct the professional evaluation of applicants seeking licensure as medical cannabis growers, processors and dispensers within the state. RESI is processing the applications that meet the mandatory qualifications criteria; its team is then assigning unique identifying numbers to each application and separating each application into sections that will be evaluated by third-party evaluators who are subject matter experts.

Using the scores provided by the subject matter experts, RESI will aggregate the scores from each application, taking into account the weighting comprehensively outlined in the application. RESI will rank the applications based on these scores for the Commission to review. The Commission will make the final decision on issuing licenses.

Under applicable state regulations, the Commission can award a maximum of 15 grower licenses, an unlimited number of processor licenses and up to two dispensary licenses in each of the state’s senatorial districts.

About the Natalie M. LaPrade Maryland Medical Cannabis Commission

The Natalie M. LaPrade Maryland Medical Cannabis Commission develops policies, procedures and regulations to implement programs that ensure medical cannabis is available to qualifying patients in a safe and effective manner. The Commission oversees all licensing, registration, inspection and testing measures pertaining to Maryland’s medical cannabis program and provides relevant program information to patients, physicians, growers, dispensers, processors, testing laboratories and caregivers.

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