

HUMBOLDT COUNTY GROWERS ALLIANCE

March 18th, 2020

Dear Supervisors and County Staff,

We are writing to encourage the County to designate cannabis as an essential medicine, and licensed cannabis businesses as essential businesses, as shelter-in-place orders are implemented across the state.

We recommend the following language to be included in any shelter-in-place order to accomplish this goal, both clarifying that cannabis businesses are essential healthcare operations, and limiting cannabis retail to curbside pickup or delivery.

“For purposes of this Order, individuals may leave their residence to work for or obtain services at any “Healthcare Operations” including hospitals, clinics, dentists, pharmacies, licensed cannabis businesses, pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, other healthcare facilities, healthcare suppliers, home healthcare services providers, mental health providers, or any related and/or ancillary healthcare services. “Healthcare Operations” also includes veterinary care and all healthcare services provided to animals. This exemption shall be construed broadly to avoid any impacts to the delivery of healthcare, broadly defined. “Healthcare Operations” does not include fitness and exercise gyms and similar. Licensed cannabis retail facilities/dispensaries shall operate only via curbside pickup or delivery.”

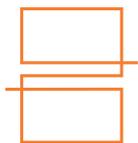
We also recommend that the order includes the language adopted in all other counties, that designates supply chains for essential businesses as themselves being essential.

[Essential businesses include]: “Businesses that supply other essential businesses with the support or supplies necessary to operate.”

Like other essential businesses under these orders, cannabis businesses should be required to follow Social Distancing measures and to take all possible public health precautions during their operation.

California Counties are Defining Cannabis Businesses as Essential Healthcare Operations

In the Bay Area counties that have adopted shelter-in-place orders since Monday, there has been a concerted effort to define those essential businesses that are necessary for people to continue to obtain food, medicine, cleaning supplies, and other essential products. Grocery stores, pharmacies, healthcare operations, consumer delivery, and hardware stores are among the businesses that these counties have specifically identified as essential.



HUMBOLDT COUNTY GROWERS ALLIANCE

Over the past 48 hours, counties have begun to either clarify or explicitly state, in their shelter-in-place orders, that cannabis businesses are essential medical businesses. Areas clarifying that cannabis is considered essential include San Francisco

(<https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Coronavirus-SF-s-cannabis-dispensaries-shut-15138052.php>), San Jose

(<https://www.mercurynews.com/2020/03/17/coronavirus-cannabis-dispensaries-are-essential-businesses-in-san-jose-city-says/>), Santa Cruz County, Alameda County, Monterey County, and others.

In our view, these counties have made the right decision. Simply, cannabis is medicine. Large numbers of Californians require cannabis to cope with and treat pain, seizures, appetite suppression, insomnia, anxiety, and other medicinal issues. California law has recognized cannabis as essential medicine since 1996, even going so far as to spurn the federal government in order to make cannabis available to people in need, and this decision has been continually reinforced, up to last year's passage of the cannabis compassion bill SB 34. Just as pharmacies and medical providers stay open during this crisis, licensed cannabis businesses should receive the same consideration.

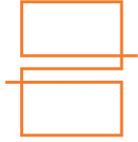
The initial shelter-in-place orders of the Bay Area counties did not specifically reference cannabis, resulting in confusion on whether cannabis was included as essential, confusion which has now been clarified in most areas. On Tuesday night, Sonoma County issued the first order that clearly identifies cannabis businesses as healthcare operations. We support this explicit recognition to reduce the confusion that accompanied the Bay Area ordinances.

Cannabis and Social Distancing

Public health is our top priority during this crisis. All essential businesses operating during shelter-in-place orders, including cannabis businesses, should be required to follow the Social Distancing measures required by public health officials and outlined in shelter-in-place orders.

Our members who have employees are already implementing social distancing measures including requiring employees to work from home if possible, ensuring that employees with symptoms do not report to work, maintaining at least six feet of physical distance, and implementing hygiene and handwashing measures.

The cannabis industry is fortunate to be in a position where social distancing is easier than it might be in other industries. California's cannabis industry has an existing delivery-only infrastructure, many of our farms are already extremely remote and isolated, and many manufacturing and distribution businesses are small enough to more easily implement social distancing requirements.



HUMBOLDT COUNTY GROWERS ALLIANCE

As a trade association, we are committed to distributing the most up-to-date public health information to our members and to sharing among ourselves best practices and standard operating procedures that our members are developing for social distancing.

This crisis will require all of us to do our part to avert the medical, economic, and human costs of the coronavirus and the potential shutdowns that accompany it. The cannabis industry is committed to working with the county, providing medicine to people in need, and implementing all possible public health measures to protect our community against the further spread of illness.

Thank you for your leadership during this very complicated time.

Sincerely,

Terra Carver
Humboldt County Growers Alliance
Executive Director