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Washington Legislature Passes Cannabis Compliance Reform

Government, industry collaboration upholds safety and viability of regulated marketplace

WASHINGTON – Today the Washington Cannabusiness Association applauded the Washington State Legislature as the House of Representatives voted 88-8 to adopt a broad package of reforms for Liquor and Cannabis Board practices that will now go to the Senate floor for a concurrence vote before going to Governor Inslee for his signature. The legislation, buoyed by significant bipartisan support, was sponsored by Senator Rivers, Palumbo and Wagoner, and previously passed the State Senate with a 41-5 vote of approval. In addition to the bill’s sponsors, the legislation greatly benefitted from the leadership of Representatives Kirby, Stanford and MacEwen, as well as Senator Keiser and all the legislators who provided input during this important process.

The cannabis industry comprises more than 10,000 jobs in Washington State, contributing more than \$1 billion in state taxes for priorities such as education and public safety.

SB 5318 was crafted with input from legislative leaders, the Liquor and Cannabis Board (LCB) and cannabis industry stakeholders based on a consensus that the enforcement practices of the LCB must be adjusted to better serve the core responsibilities of the agency, including accountability to the public. The legislation will implement the following priorities:

- A culture of compliance – based on the regulatory framework of the Department of Health and Labor & Industries – that emphasizes observance and conformity with the law as opposed to inconsistent catch-and-punish practices that fail to distinguish between highly-regulated, taxpaying licensees and the illicit market
- Adopts a program for training businesses on constantly-evolving rules, as well as the ability to request LCB advice in good faith without fear of penalties
- Allows for the reduction or waiving of penalties for violations that do not affect public safety if a business appropriately remedies the error

- Preserves all enforcement practices that prioritize public safety and keep products out of the hands of minors

“On behalf of the entire cannabis industry, we applaud our state leaders for their determination to implement these critical reforms,” **said Vicki Christophersen, executive director of the Washington CannaBusiness Association.** “The industry has never wavered in its commitment to work collaboratively with lawmakers and regulators in our shared goal to uphold public safety while refocusing appropriate enforcement measures on the illicit market. Our members especially thank the bipartisan sponsors of this legislation – Senators Rivers, Palumbo and Wagoner – as well as Senator Keiser and Representatives Kirby, Stanford and MacEwen who spent countless hours with their fellow legislators to provide important input in their work with stakeholders on policies that protect public safety and appropriately adopt best practices for effective regulatory compliance.”

As the cannabis industry association representing the entire spectrum of businesses in the regulated marketplace, the Washington CannaBusiness Association was proud to represent the industry during the legislative process. More than 100 members visited Olympia from across the state and to testify in support of these reforms, sharing their direct experiences working with the LCB. Journalists in Everett, Spokane, Vancouver, Tacoma, Seattle and national outlets reported on the legislation closely as it advanced through the Senate and the House.

About Washington CannaBusiness Association

Washington CannaBusiness Association solely represents Washington’s licensed and regulated cannabis businesses and provides its members with general support and representation before regulatory agencies and the legislature. As an association of cannabis producers, processors and retailers who have gathered to promote the private cannabis industry created by Initiative 502 and our member companies, our mission is to advocate on behalf of our member companies in the legislative, regulatory, legal and public policy arenas.

Learn more about Washington CannaBusiness Association by visiting our website at <http://www.wacannabusiness.org>

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