U.S. Department of Justice
Drug Enforcement Administration

www.dea.gov

8701 Morrissette Drive
Springfield, VA 22152

Tom Mielke
Marc Boldt
Steve Stuart
Board of Clark County Commissioners
1300 Franklin Street
P.O. Box 5000
Vancouver, Washington 98666-5000

SUBJECT: Application of the *Controlled Substances Act* (*CSA*) to the Board of Clark County Commissioners and Clark County Employees

Dear Messrs. Mielke, Boldt, and Stuart:

Thank you for your December 2, 2011 letter addressed to Attorney General Eric Holder which was referred to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) for a response.

The Department of Justice has stated that Congress has determined that marijuana is a schedule I controlled substance and, as such, growing, distributing, and possessing marijuana in any capacity, other than as part of a federally authorized research program, is a violation of federal law regardless of state laws permitting such activities. This is reflected in the text of the *CSA* and the decisions of the United States Supreme Court in *United States v. Oakland Cannabis Buyers' Cooperative*, 532 U.S. 483 (2001), and *Gonzales v. Raich*, 545 U.S. 1 (2005). These federal law concepts are premised on the facts that marijuana has never been demonstrated in sound scientific studies to be safe and effective for the treatment of any disease or condition and, therefore, the Food and Drug Administration has never approved marijuana as a drug. As the Supreme Court stated, "for purposes of the Controlled Substances Act, marijuana has 'no currently accepted medical use' at all." *Oakland Cannabis Buyers' Cooperative*, 532 U.S. at 491.

In your correspondence to the Attorney General you quote from an April 14, 2011 letter written to the Honorable Christine Gregoire, Washington State Governor by the U.S. Attorneys for both the Eastern and Western Districts of Washington in which they say that "state employees who conducted activities mandated by the Washington [medical marijuana] legislative proposals would not be immune from liability under the CSA." Although that letter pertained to the

Washington state medical marijuana law and Washington state employees, the principles expressed in that letter are useful in addressing any county "medical marijuana" ordinance or provision implementing state law. As that letter indicated, anyone who knowingly carries out the marijuana activities contemplated by Washington state law, as well as anyone who facilitates such activities, or conspires to commit such violations, is subject to criminal prosecution as provided in the *CSA*. That same conclusion would apply with equal force to the proposed activities of the Board of Clark County Commissioners and Clark County employees.

Such persons may also be subject to money laundering statutes. In addition, the *CSA* provides for forfeiture of real property and other tangible property used to facilitate the commission of such crimes, as well as the forfeiture of all money derived from, or traceable to, such activity.

Thank you for your inquiry regarding this important matter.

Sincerely,

Joseph T. Rannazzisi
Deputy Assistant Administrator
Office of Diversion Control

BOARD OF CLARK COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
Tom Mielke • Marc Boldt • Steve Stuart

proud past, promising future
CLARK COUNTY
WASHINGTON

December 2, 2011

The Honorable Eric Holder
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Holder:

We request written guidance about the U.S. Department of Justice's position on enforcement of the Controlled Substances Act if county code, in accordance with state law, were to establish a regulatory system wherein county officials zone, review, permit and inspect facilities used to dispense, produce and process marijuana for medical use.

Engrossed Second Substitute Bill 5073 in part became Washington law on July 22, 2011. Section 403 of the new law allows qualified patients and designated providers "to create and participate in collective gardens for the purpose of producing, processing, transporting and delivering cannabis for medical use." Gov. Chris Gregoire, in her statement explaining a partial veto of the bill, wrote the gardens "should be conditioned on compliance with local government location and health and safety specifications."

The Board of Clark County Commissioners adopted an emergency resolution creating a temporary moratorium to preclude the siting and vesting of any "community garden" before proper planning is complete. The board also was required to adopt a work plan to make progress toward zoning and regulating this new use. Its first task is to request a Department of Justice opinion about potential liability Clark County and its employees could have if we move toward knowingly regulating this use.

Now faced with a tolling moratorium and need to begin drafting regulations, Clark County seeks advice. In an April 14 letter to Gov. Gregoire, your agency said "state employees who conducted activities mandated by the Washington legislative proposals would not be immune from liability under the CSA." Specifically, the Board of Clark County Commissioners wants to know whether that also would be true if county employees are asked to knowingly zone, review, permit and inspect facilities for producing, processing, transporting and delivering medical cannabis. Would the Board of Clark County Commissioners or county employees be immune from arrest and liability when, in the course of their jobs, they do work related to zoning, review of permits and inspections of these facilities?

Thank you for your timely response.

Sincerely,

Tom Mielke, Chair Marc Boldt Steve Stuart

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ATTACHMENT 7

U.S. Department of Justice

Office of the Deputy Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

June 29, 2011

MEMORANDUM FOR UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS

FROM: James M. Cole
Deputy Attorney General

SUBJECT: Guidance Regarding the Ogden Memo in Jurisdictions Seeking to Authorize Marijuana for Medical Use

Over the last several months some of you have requested the Department's assistance in responding to inquiries from State and local governments seeking guidance about the Department's position on enforcement of the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) in jurisdictions that have under consideration, or have implemented, legislation that would sanction and regulate the commercial cultivation and distribution of marijuana purportedly for medical use. Some of these jurisdictions have considered approving the cultivation of large quantities of marijuana, or broadening the regulation and taxation of the substance. You may have seen letters responding to these inquiries by several United States Attorneys. Those letters are entirely consistent with the October 2009 memorandum issued by Deputy Attorney General David Ogden to federal prosecutors in States that have enacted laws authorizing the medical use of marijuana (the "Ogden Memo").

The Department of Justice is committed to the enforcement of the Controlled Substances Act in all States. Congress has determined that marijuana is a dangerous drug and that the illegal distribution and sale of marijuana is a serious crime that provides a significant source of revenue to large scale criminal enterprises, gangs, and cartels. The Ogden Memorandum provides guidance to you in deploying your resources to enforce the CSA as part of the exercise of the broad discretion you are given to address federal criminal matters within your districts.

A number of states have enacted some form of legislation relating to the medical use of marijuana. Accordingly, the Ogden Memo reiterated to you that prosecution of significant traffickers of illegal drugs, including marijuana, remains a core priority, but advised that it is likely not an efficient use of federal resources to focus enforcement efforts on individuals with cancer or other serious illnesses who use marijuana as part of a recommended treatment regimen consistent with applicable state law, or their caregivers. The term "caregiver" as used in the memorandum meant just that: individuals providing care to individuals with cancer or other serious illnesses, not commercial operations cultivating, selling or distributing marijuana.

The Department's view of the efficient use of limited federal resources as articulated in the Ogden Memorandum has not changed. There has, however, been an increase in the scope of

commercial cultivation, sale, distribution and use of marijuana for purported medical purposes. For example, within the past 12 months, several jurisdictions have considered or enacted legislation to authorize multiple large-scale, privately-operated industrial marijuana cultivation centers. Some of these planned facilities have revenue projections of millions of dollars based on the planned cultivation of tens of thousands of cannabis plants.

The Ogden Memorandum was never intended to shield such activities from federal enforcement action and prosecution, even where those activities purport to comply with state law. Persons who are in the business of cultivating, selling or distributing marijuana, and those who knowingly facilitate such activities, are in violation of the Controlled Substances Act, regardless of state law. Consistent with resource constraints and the discretion you may exercise in your district, such persons are subject to federal enforcement action, including potential prosecution. State laws or local ordinances are not a defense to civil or criminal enforcement of federal law with respect to such conduct, including enforcement of the CSA. Those who engage in transactions involving the proceeds of such activity may also be in violation of federal money laundering statutes and other federal financial laws.

The Department of Justice is tasked with enforcing existing federal criminal laws in all states, and enforcement of the CSA has long been and remains a core priority.

cc: Lanny A. Breuer
Assistant Attorney General, Criminal Division

B. Todd Jones
United States Attorney
District of Minnesota
Chair, AGAC

Michele M. Leonhart
Administrator
Drug Enforcement Administration

H. Marshall Jarrett
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Eastern District of Washington

Suite 340 Thomas S. Foley U. S. Courthouse (509) 353-2767
P. O. Box 1494 Fax (509) 353-2766
Spokane, Washington 99210-1494

Honorable Christine Gregoire
Washington State Governor
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, Washington 98504-0002

April 14, 2011

Re: Medical Marijuana Legislative Proposals

Dear Honorable Governor Gregoire:

We write in response to your letter dated April 13, 2011, seeking guidance from the Attorney General and our two offices concerning the practical effect of the legislation currently being considered by the Washington State Legislature concerning medical marijuana. We understand that the proposals being considered by the Legislature would establish a licensing scheme for marijuana growers and dispensaries, and for processors of marijuana-infused foods among other provisions. We have consulted with the Attorney General and the Deputy Attorney General about the proposed legislation. This letter is written to ensure there is no confusion regarding the Department of Justice's view of such a licensing scheme.

As the Department has stated on many occasions, Congress has determined that marijuana is a controlled substance. Congress placed marijuana in Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) and, as such, growing, distributing, and possessing marijuana in any capacity, other than as part of a federally authorized research program, is a violation of federal law regardless of state laws permitting such activities.

The prosecution of individuals and organizations involved in the trade of any illegal drugs and the disruption of drug trafficking organizations is a core priority of the Department. This core priority includes prosecution of business enterprises that unlawfully market and sell marijuana. Accordingly, while the Department does not focus its limited resources on seriously ill individuals who use marijuana as part of a medically recommended treatment regimen in compliance with state law as stated in the October 2009 Ogden Memorandum, we maintain the authority to enforce the CSA vigorously against individuals and organizations that participate in unlawful manufacturing and distribution activity involving marijuana, even if such activities are permitted under state law. The Department's investigative and prosecutorial resources will continue to be directed toward these objectives.

Consistent with federal law, the Department maintains the authority to pursue criminal or civil actions for any CSA violations whenever the Department determines that such legal action is warranted. This includes, but is not limited to, actions to enforce the criminal provisions of the CSA such as:

- 21 U.S.C. § 841 (making it illegal to manufacture, distribute, or possess with intent to distribute any controlled substance including marijuana);

- 21 U.S.C. § 856 (making it unlawful to knowingly open, lease, rent, maintain, or use property for the manufacturing, storing, or distribution of controlled substances);

- 21 U.S.C. § 860 (making it unlawful to distribute or manufacture controlled substances within 1,000 feet of schools, colleges, playgrounds, and public housing facilities, and within 100 feet of any youth centers, public swimming pools, and video arcade facilities);

- 21 U.S.C. § 843 (making it unlawful to use any communication facility to commit felony violations of the CSA); and

- 21 U.S.C. § 846 (making it illegal to conspire to commit any of the crimes set forth in the CSA).

In addition, Federal money laundering and related statutes which prohibit a variety of different types of financial activity involving the movement of drug proceeds may likewise be utilized. The Government may also pursue civil injunctions, and the forfeiture of drug proceeds, property traceable to such proceeds, and property used to facilitate drug violations.

The Washington legislative proposals will create a licensing scheme that permits large-scale marijuana cultivation and distribution. This would authorize conduct contrary to federal law and thus, would undermine the federal government's efforts to regulate the possession, manufacturing, and trafficking of controlled substances. Accordingly, the Department could consider civil and criminal legal remedies regarding those who set up marijuana growing facilities and dispensaries as they will be doing so in violation of federal law. Others who knowingly facilitate the actions of the licensees, including property owners, landlords, and financiers should also know that their conduct violates federal law. In addition, state employees who conducted activities mandated by the Washington legislative proposals would not be immune from liability under the CSA. Potential actions the Department could consider include injunctive actions to prevent cultivation and distribution of marijuana and other associated violations of the CSA; civil fines; criminal prosecution; and the forfeiture of any

property used to facilitate a violation of the CSA. As the Attorney General has repeatedly stated, the Department of Justice remains firmly committed to enforcing the CSA in all states.

We hope this letter assists the State of Washington and potential licensees in making informed decisions regarding the cultivation, manufacture, and distribution of marijuana.

Very truly yours,

Jenny A. Durkan
United States Attorney
Western District of Washington

Michael C. Ormsby
United States Attorney
Eastern District of Washington