



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
P. O. BOX 3378  
HONOLULU, HI 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:  
File:

February 26, 2021

Dear [REDACTED]

Subject: Denial of Petition to Add Anxiety Disorder as a Qualifying Condition for the Medical Use of Cannabis in the State of Hawaii

This letter is in response to the petition that was originally submitted on April 24, 2020 and resubmitted with revisions on April 30, 2020, requesting the addition of anxiety disorder as a qualifying condition for the medical use of cannabis in the State of Hawaii. The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) received a petition in 2017 to add generalized anxiety disorder (GAD). The petition was denied citing limited and inconclusive evidence that cannabis has beneficial use in the treatment or alleviation of the symptoms specifically related to GAD. Although DOH previously denied the 2017 petition for GAD, DOH reviewed your petition and found that it met the requirements, as specified in HAR § 11-160-7, for DOH to consider adding anxiety as a qualifying medical condition.

In addition to reviewing your submission, DOH considered public testimony, laws and policies of medical cannabis programs in other parts of the country, and assessed the results of a comprehensive medical literature review related to medical cannabis and anxiety to include the five types of adult-onset anxiety disorders (generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, panic disorder, agoraphobia, and specific phobia) as defined by the DSM-V. DOH finds that:

- All written and oral testimony submitted during the public hearing process was supportive of adding anxiety disorders as a qualifying medical condition;
- Of all the states and U.S. jurisdictions permitting medical cannabis, five states and Puerto Rico recognize anxiety disorders as a qualifying medical condition, and many of the remaining medical cannabis states with available information have either denied or voted against adding the condition to their approved state list;
- A review of the available peer-review scientific evidence found insufficient evidence to support the safety and efficacy of any cannabis formulation for the treatment of any anxiety disorder defined by the DSM-V; and
- There is also mixed evidence to suggest that some formulations and strengths may increase the symptoms of anxiety in adults and the potential for adverse outcomes is of great concern.

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After investigation and careful consideration of the available information, DOH has determined that, cannabis may not be effective for people diagnosed with any anxiety disorder. Although some individuals may benefit from cannabis use, different doses and types of cannabis may make anxiety symptoms worse. DOH cannot support adding anxiety disorder as defined by the DSM-V as a qualifying debilitating condition for the approval of medical cannabis use in Hawaii. Thus, the petition is denied. The decision to deny adding anxiety disorder as defined by the DSM-V as a qualifying debilitating medical condition for the use of cannabis in the state of Hawaii is the final agency action.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth A. Char, M.D.  
Director of Health