

MATT GAETZ  
1ST DISTRICT, FLORIDA

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET  
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-0901

WASHINGTON OFFICE  
507 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
(202) 225-4136

DISTRICT OFFICE  
226 SOUTH PALAFOX PLACE  
6TH FLOOR  
PENSACOLA, FL 32502  
(850) 479-1183

<http://gaetz.house.gov>

August 23, 2017

The Honorable Jefferson Sessions  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Sessions:

We write to express our concern regarding an August 15th article from the Washington Post, “Justice Department at odds with DEA on marijuana research, MS-13,” which asserts that the Justice Department has prevented the DEA from moving forward in its permitting process for marijuana research. The purpose of our letter is threefold: first, we wish to establish the veracity of this article’s claims. Second, if the article’s claims are true, we would like to know the rationale behind the Department of Justice’s decision. Finally, we would like to encourage you to proceed with rapidity on the DEA’s permitting process, as we believe it is in keeping with President Trump’s campaign promises, and the best interests of the American people.

On August 11, 2016, Chuck Rosenberg, Acting Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration, stated in a letter to Governors Gina Raimondo of Rhode Island and Jay Inslee of Washington that the DEA “fully support[s] legitimate medical and scientific research on marijuana and its constituent parts,” and that the DEA “will continue to seek ways to make the process for those researchers more efficient and effective.” The following day, on August 12th, the DEA established a new rule (21 CFR Part 1301, Docket No. DEA-447) that it would begin accepting applications to grow cannabis for the purposes of medical and scientific research.

According to the Post story of August 15, as well as a July 24 report from Scientific American, over two dozen applications have been completed. These applicants, however, have received neither an approval nor a denial — they are in limbo. The Post claims this is because the Justice Department will not give the “sign-off to move forward” on processing these applications. Quite simply, we would like to know whether this is true, and, if so, we would like to know the rationale for this decision.

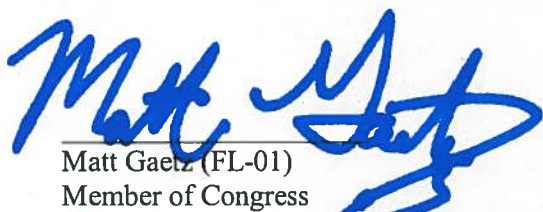
Over eighty percent of Americans believe that doctor-prescribed marijuana should be legal, according to recent polls. Yet despite widespread public support, health care professionals are understandably cautious about prescribing medical marijuana. Further research into its safety and efficacy is necessary. Only rigorous scientific research can ascertain the medical potential of cannabis, if any, but the rules and regulations surrounding cannabis make such research extremely challenging. The cumbersome and lengthy permitting process, as well as the difficulty of obtaining different types and “strains” of cannabis with which to perform research, have thwarted researchers’ ability to study the pharmacology and potential medical usage of cannabis. The DEA’s new permitting process of August 2016 does not attempt to change marijuana laws, except for the acquisition of research material. Such a change is small, but will

greatly enhance scientists' ability to perform research, and, as such, it should not be hindered unnecessarily.

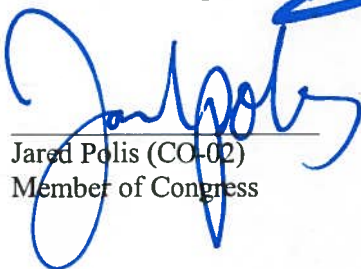
A "tough-on-crime" position is important to this administration, and your efforts to curb the importation of drugs into America are laudable. While we must continue our fight against organized crime and drug-related violence, it is our opinion that medical marijuana research falls outside of those categories, and does not pose a pressing danger to American society. This view, it seems, is supported by President Trump: in an October 29, 2015 campaign rally in Sparks, NV, Mr. Trump stated that he believed in the efficacy of medical cannabis for certain patients — a position he expressed several times at many other campaign stops. Indeed, as you surely know, many patients and patients' advocacy groups nationwide have attested to the potential benefits of medical marijuana — including its usage as a treatment for PTSD, which has afflicted many of the heroic men and women of our armed forces.

These groups' claims for medical marijuana's efficacy can only be determined through scientific research, which will be expedited and enhanced by the DEA's new permitting process. It is worrisome to think that the Department of Justice, the cornerstone of American civil society, would limit new and potentially groundbreaking research simply because it does not want to follow a rule. We write to inquire whether the allegations raised by the Post are true, and, if so, to understand the Department of Justice's rationale in refusing to process these applications. Finally, because we know you to be a man with unwavering commitment to the rule of law, we ask with respect for the DEA's rule to be followed, and for the permitting process to move forward with all possible expeditiousness.

Sincerely,



Matt Gaetz (FL-01)  
Member of Congress



Jared Polis (CO-02)  
Member of Congress



Dana Rohrabacher (CA-48)  
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer (OR-03)  
Member of Congress