

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015

The Honorable Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

On November 4th, Chuck Rosenberg, Acting Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), in comments widely covered by the press, called the notion of smoking medical marijuana “a joke.”

His statements are indicative of a throwback ideology rooted in the failed War on Drugs. They do not reflect the overwhelming body of testimonial evidence, reforms happening across the country at the state level and in Congress, or the opinion of the American people – and they certainly don’t reflect statements you’ve made or actions you’ve directed your agencies to take. Rather, these statements demonstrate Mr. Rosenberg is not the right person to lead the DEA.

Full medical marijuana programs have been approved by voters or state legislatures now in 23 states, Washington, DC and Guam, with the first program beginning nearly 20 years ago in California. An additional 17 states have approved more limited programs. Well over one million people use medical marijuana – smoked or otherwise – in accordance with state law to relieve symptoms associated with chemotherapy, glaucoma, PTSD, chronic pain, and more. There is overwhelming testimonial evidence that marijuana offers relief for symptoms when nothing else has – including as a more effective pain management tool than highly addictive narcotics.

In addition to trivializing these very serious programs and experiences, Mr. Rosenberg also stated that, “there are pieces of marijuana – extracts or constituents or component parts – that have great promise. But if you talk about smoking the leaf of marijuana, which is what people are talking about when they talk about medicinal marijuana, it has never been shown to be safe or effective as medicine.”

This statement demonstrates a deep hypocrisy. The only reason there are remaining doubts about the safety or effectiveness of marijuana, or questions about the proper applications of extracts or component parts, is because federal policies have routinely hampered medical marijuana research for decades. The DEA itself has been integral to limiting access to marijuana that can be legally used for research, creating bottleneck and uncertainty challenges for potential researchers. Additionally, DEA has continuously denied petitions to reschedule marijuana, leaving it at the tightly controlled Schedule I level, also limiting the ability of researchers to closely examine it as medicine.

Mr. Rosenberg is right that more research is necessary to answer many remaining important questions about the best uses for medical marijuana. Rather than calling medical marijuana a joke, however, he should acknowledge that it has clearly helped people across the country and call for an immediate end to the federal barriers that have restricted research to date, acknowledging the direct role the DEA has played in limiting science.

Mr. Rosenberg's statements send a clear signal to the American people that the federal government isn't listening to them. It erodes trust. Cavalier statements like these fly in the face of state policy and the experience of millions of patients. Over 75 percent of the public supports allowing for the use of medical marijuana if recommended by a physician and surveys have found that a majority of physicians also support legalizing medical marijuana.

Through his statements, Mr. Rosenberg has demonstrated he is not the right person to hold the job as head of the DEA and we urge you to find new leadership that can work to develop the right tools to properly rationalize our treatment of marijuana.

Sincerely,



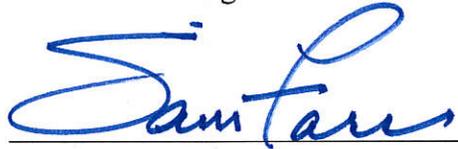
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Dana Rohrabacher  
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