



MEMORANDUM

TO: CRC BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FROM: JEFF BROWN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SUBJECT: ELIMINATION OF PATIENT REGISTRATION FEES WITH DIGITAL ID CARDS
DATE: DECEMBER 7, 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In order to continue to facilitate and improve access to medicinal cannabis in New Jersey, Cannabis Regulatory Commission staff are recommending the Cannabis Regulatory Commission adopts a regulatory waiver to:

- 1) Eliminate the cost of a patient and caregiver registration card where the patient/caregiver opts for a digital ID card; and
- 2) Reduce the fee for a physical ID card from \$50 (normal registration fee) or \$20 (seniors, veterans, individuals receiving government assistance) to \$10 every two years.

BACKGROUND:

One of the core functions of the Medicinal Cannabis Program (“MCP”) is to register qualifying patients and their caregivers and issue identification cards that provide access to alternative treatment centers where patients may purchase medicinal cannabis.

Since 2018, the Department of Health and subsequently, the Cannabis Regulatory Commission, have sought to improve access to medicinal cannabis for qualifying patients. One of the core recommendations in the Department of Health’s Executive Order #6 report was to reduce the registration fee for patients from \$200 to \$100 every two years, and to expand qualification for a \$20 reduced fee card to seniors and veterans (it was previously only available to those receiving government assistance). This reduction was enacted in March 2018.

In March 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Health issued a waiver reducing all caregiver fees to \$20 to help patients with debilitating medical conditions to use caregivers to access alternative treatment centers.



In July 2022, four months after the first adult use cannabis sales, the Cannabis Regulatory Commission adopted and implemented a further reduction to patient registration fees, reducing the \$100 fee to \$50 every two years.

DIGITAL ID CARDS:

In 2022, the Cannabis Regulatory Commission released a new updated patient portal. CRC staff have now begun a development project within the new portal to begin issuing digital patient ID cards – a card that can be stored and utilized on digital devices, like mobile phones, or printed out by patients and caregivers. The move to digital ID cards will speed up processing times for new patients – there will no longer be a wait for a physical card to be delivered in the mail – and it will reduce staff time spent on processing and issuing physical cards.

Once deployed, digital ID cards will also help reduce CRC staff time and resources needed to issue patient and caregiver cards. It is expected that most patients will prefer a free digital ID card rather than opt for a physical card. The elimination of printing and mail costs for anyone opting for a digital ID card will enable the CRC to look to reduce fees even further.

The deployment of digital ID cards is currently projected for early 2024.

FEE REDUCTIONS:

To correspond with the release of digital ID cards, CRC staff are proposing a new fee structure to be implemented through a regulatory waiver.

- 1) For any patient or caregiver who opts for a digital ID card, there shall be no fee for the issuance of a registry ID card.
- 2) For any patient or caregiver who opts for a physical ID card, the fee shall be \$10 every two years.

This new fee structure will align with current regulations by ensuring all reduced fee eligible patients and caregivers receive a further reduction in fees, even if they choose to have a physical ID card, and it will extend the new reduced \$10 registration fee to all patients and caregivers opting for a physical card.

Secondly and more importantly, for patients and caregivers who opt for digital ID cards, there will be no fee.

TIMING:



If adopted by the Commission, all registry ID cards beginning on December 8th will be \$10 for physical cards. Then in early 2024, once digital cards are enabled in the patient portal, new and renewing patients will be able to register for free – if they opt for a digital ID card.

RECOMMENDATION:

CRC staff recommend the CRC Board of Commissioners approve the regulatory waivers to reduce and eliminate fees for New Jersey’s patients and caregivers. If approved, these waivers will bolster enrollment in New Jersey’s Medicinal Cannabis Program by making enrollment more affordable than ever.