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April 2023

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2019 Cannabis Business Award's Publication of the Year



Lisa Black

Quality Flower: A Guide to Insa Grower's Reserve Flower

BY LISA BLACK

Experienced patients are often on the lookout for flower that is extra special to fit their needs. Insa Grower's Reserve flower is well known for being some of the best cannabis available in the industry. It seems like everyone pays attention when there is Grower's Reserve on the menu! One reason for its popularity is the high potency it has, but there is so much more that makes this flower special.

All of Insa's flower is grown with the highest quality standards with guidance from our Head of Cultivation in Florida, TG Cummings, bringing lots of innovation into the mix. Our grow team is borderline obsessed with creating the most perfect cannabis possible, and that means caring about more than just THC content. In order for a flower to be classified as Grower's Reserve, it must pass stringent tests. So, what does it take for a flower to be Grower's Reserve?

Here at Insa, we believe that more terpenes make for better flower. Terpenes are the essential oils that give cannabis its distinctive smell as well as the different effects from strain to strain. Different terpene combinations, or profiles, can help target certain experiences. That's one reason we want our Grower's Reserve flower to be rich in those essential oils! Simply put, more terpenes = more flavor and effects.

When you open a brand-new package

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Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in the Cannabis Industry

BY SUMMER WESTERBUR

In an MJBiz 2022 special report, "Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in the Cannabis Industry," women's leadership in cannabis declined dramatically from 36.8% in 2019 to 23.1% last year.

How did the cannabis industry get here? An industry that began as an activist movement surely should not rank below other industries in gender equity.

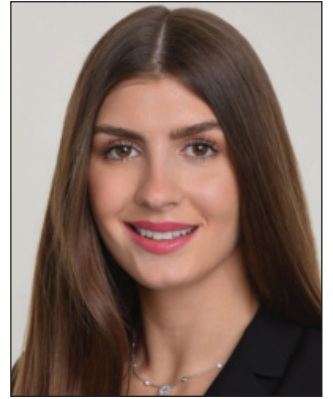
Historically, white men have had disproportionate access to capital and connections. Business requires capital and cannabis is a young industry which means many businesses are start-ups. Access to capital increases opportunity and men have more access to both financial and social capital.

The last year has been an incredibly challenging time for the cannabis industry, and we've seen unprecedented consolidation. Corporate consolidation inevitably leads to fewer women in leadership positions due to the gender balance of most corporate boards, perhaps a partial explanation for the decreasing number of women in c-suite and leadership roles.

Continued on page 4



Summer Westerbur



Paula Savchenko

SPOTLIGHT: Paula Savchenko, Esq. Founder, Cannacore Group

We are a full-service cannabis and psychedelic licensing company specializing in helping businesses enter new markets to achieve their long-term goals. Cannacore Group has more than 19 years of combined knowledge and experience in the Cannabis Business Application Process. From Florida to California, we have achieved continuous success in obtaining cannabis business licenses with an 85% success rate!

What do we do?

- Work with lobbyists and advocates to work toward nationwide cannabis legalization.
- Collaborate and advise groups on how to achieve their goals in attaining cannabis business licenses in new and expanding markets.
- Identify new markets to target, put together an all-encompassing business plan, and bring in additional resources as needed, including funding and an operational team.
- Provide proven Standard Operating Procedures included in the application process as well as after attaining the license.

It is important to have proper guidance while navigating, entering or operating in the cannabis industry. Whether you need an expert to help you enter the industry or if you are already an operational busi-

Continued on page 5

Cresco Labs Continues Florida Expansion with Two New Store Openings

Cresco Labs announced its Florida retail footprint has grown to 28 total dispensaries with store openings in Palm Harbor and Lake Worth. The Company's continued expansion brings its nationwide store count to 63.

"We've served almost a million customers at our Sunnyside stores so far this year, and we've achieved this milestone by providing excellent customer service and a breath of products from our branded portfolio," said Charles Bachtell, Cresco Labs' CEO & Co-Founder.

"Our newest Palm Harbor and Lake Worth locations expand our reach in two of Florida's most populous west central and southeastern regions. These two stores, joining our nearby Sunnyside locations, will enable us to sufficiently serve their respective patient communities with their cannabis needs."

Sunnyside Palm Harbor is located at 35098 US Highway 19N near major retailers like Walmart and Publix. In addition to this store, Cresco has two stores in Clearwater and Saint Petersburg serving the one million residents in Pinellas County.

Located at 6520 Lake Worth Rd., Sunnyside Lake Worth sits along a major thoroughfare with Walmart, Aldi, Marshalls and Target stores nearby. The new stores joins Sunnyside's other locations in Boyton Beach and West Palm Beach in serving the nearly 1.5 million residents of Palm Beach County.

Both new stores will offer a wide assortment of cannabis products from the Company's branded portfolio that includes Cresco, One Plant, Supply (High Supply), Good News, Remedi and Sunnyside. The store also has a curated selection of accessories.



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Publisher's Note

Oops I Did It Again ...



Just when Carol thought it was safe to continue rehabbing and my caregiver duties had lightened up "just a bit," I got the itch — the bucket list itch. In my mind surely the last 3 months of intensive nursing and household chores equaled our dream car – a PT Cruiser convertible. And no sooner had I rationalized this purchase and I was on the hunt for the perfect 2007 model.

Many years previous, Carol and I had been talking about "what ifs," and amazingly we both landed on a PT Cruiser convertible. Well they don't call me a bloodhound for nothing, because pretty soon I was dragging her around test driving any PT Cruiser model I could find. And much like "Goldilocks," Carol found something wrong with each one. The first one was too shaky, the second smelled smokey and the third was the wrong color, a bright flashy blue. At this point I was beginning to suspect that Carol was just finding excuses NOT to find the right car, but amazingly #4 checked all her boxes:


- ✓ smoother ride;
- ✓ clean, no smoking interior; and
- ✓ perfect vanilla body color with the dark brown top.

Yes, I know it's no Lamborghini or Ferrari, but for me and Carol I'd say it's just right.

Charles Felix 

You can reach Charles Felix at Charles@cannabisnewsflorida.com

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3,000 Cannabis Leaders and Investors to Convene at World's Largest Cannabis Business and Investment Conference, April 11-12 In Miami Beach

The world's largest gathering of high-impact decision-makers, founders and investors in cannabis is returning to Miami Beach, Florida in 2023. The 16th edition of the Benzinga Cannabis Capital Conference will take place at the Fontainebleau Miami Beach Hotel, April 11-12.

This is the place where deals get done, where money is raised, M&A starts and companies meet investors and key partners. In addition, the two-track, two-day conference will offer great content for retail investors to find key companies for their portfolios, for entrepreneurs to learn how to survive and thrive in a tough economy and for brands to identify the next big trends.

As a cannabis entrepreneur at the Benzinga Cannabis Capital Conference, you'll have the opportunity to meet more investors in two days than you've met in the last two years. You'll learn how businesses are innovating to profit in a tough environment and have a chance to engage the CEOs and decision-makers from the leading companies in the industry.

As an investor, you'll find a unique setting, perfect to learn from -and about- the companies leading the advancement of the cannabis space. Recognizing the value of your time, Benzinga has planned this event down to the smallest detail so you can make the most of it and find your next big deal.

The Benzinga Cannabis Capital Conference will feature keynotes, panel discussions, fireside chats, networking spaces and an exhibit floor, as well as investor and celebrity appearances.

For more information, visit: <https://www.benzinga.com/events/cannabis-conference/>

U.S. Justice Department Launches Application for Certificate of Pardon for Simple Possession Offenses

Last October, President Biden issued a proclamation granting clemency for all people charged or convicted of cannabis possession offenses under federal law and in Washington, DC. While the mass pardon was enacted immediately, there was no mechanism in place for eligible individuals to prove that they were covered by the proclamation. MPP and other advocates immediately called for certificates to be issued to help remove barriers to civil participation, employment, housing, and educational opportunities for those with prior convictions.

On March 3, the Department of Justice officially launched an application for receiving a certificate of pardon for federal convictions of simple marijuana possession on or before October 6, 2022. The application will enable between 6,500 and 20,000 Americans to apply for written proof that their federal convictions have been pardoned, according to the Office of the Pardon Attorney and the U.S. Sentencing Commission.

This positive development represents a small but notable step in the right direction for federal cannabis reform, with the president and federal government making a clear statement that simple cannabis possession is not an offense warranting a severe criminal penalty.

While it is encouraging at the federal level, it does not cover convictions for offenses other than simple possession, and state-level cannabis offenses are not eligible for relief through this pardon certificate process.

Ayr Wellness Expands Florida Footprint with Four New Retail Locations

Ayr Wellness Inc. announced that it has opened four new retail stores in Florida located in Lake Mary, Land O' Lakes, Orlando and Palmetto Bay. Together, the stores feature more than 14,500 sq. ft. of new retail space. "This latest group of store openings brings our Florida footprint to 57 stores, affording us the opportunity to introduce new communities to Ayr's customer experience and selection of high-quality offerings," said David Goubert, President and CEO at Ayr. "Our ongoing commitment and investment in Florida is stronger than ever, as we focus on being a Force for Good in our local communities, creating lasting relationships with our patients, and continuing to grow our presence and footprint throughout the state." As Ayr continues to open stores and expand its customer base in Florida, it is concurrently preparing for the transition from Liberty Health Sciences to AYR Cannabis Dispensary later this year. Each of the new stores will offer many of Ayr's national brands and products and feature a "bud bar," providing customers with a sensory experience showcasing samples of whole flower strains currently available for purchase. Additionally, the Palmetto Bay, Land O' Lakes and Lake Mary stores offer convenient drive-thru pick-up options for its customers.

Columbia Care Announces Co-Founder Michael Abbott's Transition to Chairman

Columbia Care Inc. announced the transition of Michael Abbott, Co-Founder of Columbia Care, from Executive Chairman to Chairman of the Board of Directors, effective immediately. Michael Abbott co-founded Columbia Care with Chief Executive Officer Nicholas Vita in 2012 and helped build the Company into one of the largest multi-state medical and adult-use cannabis providers in the U.S. In his continuing role as Chairman, Abbott will remain integrally involved in company oversight and governance. Abbott noted, "It has been an honor and a privilege to work with Nick and the extraordinary team he has built around him over the past decade. I am deeply grateful for Nick's friendship and partnership as we endeavor to build a leading company in a burgeoning industry."



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Cover Story: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in the Cannabis Industry

Continued from page 1

The year 2022 delivered a regulated cannabis market to many new states that legalized. We saw states in the northeast, like New Jersey, prioritize women-owned and social equity license applications. These programs continue to lack the funding required to make them successful, but these states are certainly improving regulations. Licenses can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal, application, and consulting fees so these programs need a funding component to be truly successful. Florida increased its annual licensing fee to \$1M, virtually destroying any hope of an equitable state industry.

So how can we bring more women into leadership and ownership roles?

Invest capital into women-run businesses

Investing capital into women-run businesses is the most obvious way to help women become business owners. Women have less access to capital. Additionally, professional development programs can help women with mentoring and coaching reaching leadership positions. Recruitment from within an organization is an effective strategy. Advertise in women-centered organizations and women-led non-profits.

Review your board. Does your board of directors reflect the general population? Women are offered fewer board positions than men. If you have eight men and two women, consider adding women. If you are offered a board position, consider recommending a woman for the position.

Professional network. Next month, write down every referral you send. Each time you refer a client to an insurance agent to purchase a liability policy or an

attorney to create an employee handbook, track it. At the end of the month, count the number of referrals sent to women.

Networking events are important for building professional networks. Historically, these have frequently been hosted at male-centric venues, like golf courses. Try avoiding golf courses, strip clubs, and other male-centric venues. If you're a guest at a networking happy hour, pay attention to who's in the room – and who's not. If it's mostly men, discuss the gender imbalance with the host. People will often do better when the problem is brought to their attention.

Refuse to speak on panels

Before you accept speaking on a panel, tell the event organizer you do not speak on all male panels and ask them to ensure women are speaking. Consider providing the names of qualified women you know who could speak on the topic. If the panel is already organized, consider recommending a woman from your organization to speak on your behalf.

The fight for gender equality can't rest on women alone. Gender equality will only become a reality when everyone takes action. Both men and women in the cannabis industry can let the world know women are valued by having women represented in your organization's leadership, board, and professional network.

Summer Westerbur is the founder of Kairos Insurance Group, a boutique insurance agency providing employee benefits in over a dozen states. She serves on the Tri-State Regional Board of Cannabis Chamber of Commerce. Summer can be reached at summer@kairosinsurancegroup.com

Fluent Hosts Grand Opening of 30th Florida Medical Cannabis Dispensary in Jacksonville

Cansortium Inc., a vertically-integrated, multi-state cannabis company operating under the Fluent™ brand, is pleased to announce the grand opening of its 30th medical cannabis dispensary in Florida and 33rd nationwide, located at 763 Atlantic Blvd., Suite 1, along with plans to open a fourth Jacksonville retail location later this year.

"Jacksonville is one of the most successful markets for Fluent, with our existing stores demonstrating the highest patient retention rates across the state," said Fluent Cannabis Care Director of Sales Victor Bindi. "Not only are we opening our third retail location in Jacksonville, but we're also looking to expand our footprint with a fourth store on the westside of Jax later this year. As we strengthen our roots in Jacksonville and continue to grow across the Sunshine State, Fluent is committed to broadening patient access to the highest-quality cannabis products, delivering a seamless retail experience to customers and providing well-paying jobs to the local community."

The new 2,585 sq. ft. medical cannabis dispensary will carry Fluent's full house of brands, including: Smokiez edibles; BLACK Line, MOODS Line and Fluent Care cartridges and tinctures; Fluent Flower pre-rolls, capsules, extracts and topicals; and their recently dropped Origins OG Kush and Origins Triangle Kush raw cannabis flower cultivated through their collaboration with Origins TK Selects. The dispensary will also carry a wide selection of consumption devices, such as approved vape batteries, and will offer daily rotating deals and discounts during store hours, Monday through Sunday from 9:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Additionally, Fluent Jacksonville Beach's online ordering platform offers patients a convenient way to secure their cannabis products. After placing an order online, patients can expect to pick up their order within 10 minutes from one of two dedicated express stations inside the store. With eight point-of-sale stations, Fluent Jacksonville Atlantic Beach is focused on providing a smooth retail experience for its patients.

Cover Story: Quality Flower: A Guide to Insa Grower's Reserve Flower

Continued from page 1

of cannabis, it's always thrilling to see big, beautiful buds. We love that feeling too, so our Grower's Reserve buds have to measure up, no small buds allowed. Throw in the perfect cure with textbook moisture content and the flower batch is almost ready for the Grower's Reserve stamp. The last and final step is that Head Grower Frank has to give it his personal seal of approval.

This painstaking process yields our Grower's Reserve, a flower Insa is very proud to serve our patients. As you can imagine, a flower this unique could be perfect for tough to treat symptoms or those with a higher tolerance. Not only does the strong THC content help clear the mind, but it can help soothe the body as well.

If you're trying Grower's Reserve, we've got some tips for you. Lots of our patients like to make their own pre-rolls when they get their hands on top-level cannabis. Others prefer to do 'snaps.' Snaps are little bowl packs of flower, most often done with a water pipe and

are small enough to consume with one flick of the lighter. This allows for the most smooth and flavorful experience since you won't be smoking any flower that has already been combusted.

Like all of our flower, we package our Grower's Reserve in the best packaging option in the cannabis market. Did you know that a sealed can of Insa flower should stay the same high quality for a year or more? Third party labs found the cannabis inside stays fresh for up to two years! That way you can purchase the flower that works best for you in bulk with confidence, knowing that the last can you open will be just as fresh as the first.

If you want to learn more about Grower's Reserve, visit an Insa location to talk with our trained associates who want to help, or call 1-877-500-INSA to speak with our knowledgeable customer relations team every day from 9 am – 7 pm.

Lisa Black is Head of Education and Training at Insa

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Cover Story: SPOTLIGHT: Paula Savchenko, Esq. Founder, Cannacore Group

Continued from page 1

ness in the space and need consultation, we are here to lead the way. We handle each step of the Cannabis Business Licensing process. From working with your team to identifying new market opportunities, putting together a strong team using our expansive network, drafting a thorough application, challenging agency action (if needed), business structuring, tax planning, and consulting to keep your business compliant and successful.

Cultivate, Process, Dispense, Testing Laboratory and Transportation

The type of licensing required for a cannabis business depends on the state as well as the type of business conducted. For example, a business that cultivates cannabis requires different licensing and permits than a business operating a dispensary.

However, in some states, such as Florida, the entire process is “vertically integrated,” which means the business cultivates, processes and dispenses cannabis under one (1) license. We can help you to interpret and apply the laws as well as write an application for your business to apply to the state to cultivate, process, dispense, test and/or transport cannabis.

As the licenses granted per state are limited, the license grant process is highly competitive, which is why it helps to have an expert on your side from the onset. As most states limit the number of licenses they will grant, it is vital to stand out amongst the other applicants during this merit-based process. Getting licensed is never simple—there are very specific requirements and guidelines that differ by state and it’s usually highly competitive, which is why most successful applicants work with consultants like Cannacore Group to help guide them.

Background of Florida Market

In 2014, the Legislature passed the Compassionate Medical Cannabis Act, creating Florida Statute § 381.986. The law granted the Department of Health the power to adopt rules necessary to implement the law. See Fla. Stat. § 381.986(5)(d) (2014). Further, the Department of Health was required to grant five nurseries’ licenses to dispense medical marijuana, one for each region in the state. See Fla. Stat. § 381.986(5)(b) (2014).

The Office of Compassionate Use, now referred to as the Office of Medical Marijuana Use (“OMMU”), came into existence as the entity within the Department of Health that oversees the licensing and other portions of the Medical Marijuana Program.

The Department of Health then promulgated rules under which a nursery could apply for a Dispensing Organization license, now referred to as a Medical

Marijuana Treatment Center (“MMTC”) license. Together, these laws and rules laid out the medical marijuana licensing scheme.

In the 2015 application cycle, the Department of Health received a total of 28 and scored 26 applications for licenses. Then, in 2016, a proposed constitutional amendment—passed by 71.3% of Florida residents—broadened the scope and use of medical marijuana in Florida and granted the Department of Health rulemaking authority under the Florida Constitution. The Florida Legislature amended § 381.986 to broaden the laws to make additional licenses available as well as allow for the production and sale of high-THC medical marijuana.

Today, after several constitutional, legislative, and regulatory changes, there are 22 licenses called Medical Marijuana Treatment Centers (“MMTC”) that serve the Florida patient population with 546 dispensaries currently operating across the state of Florida.

In accordance with Florida Statute § 381.986(8)(a)4, within six (6) months after the registration of 100,000 active qualified patients in the registry, the Department is mandated to issue four (4) additional MMTC licenses. However, as the patient registry has garnered over 800,000 qualified patients since its initial beginnings, Florida has continuously faced obstacles with underserving the patient population as the state has only maintained 22 licenses to date.

With the new application period set for this year, we hope to see the Florida medical marijuana market expand its outreach to serve those who desperately need access to their medicine.

Upcoming License: Florida

After years of waiting for Florida to release new Medical Marijuana Treatment Center Licenses (“MMTC”), the Office of Medical Marijuana Use (“OMMU”) has announced that the upcoming application periods will arrive in “batches.” Emergency Rule 64ER23-1 established that twenty-two (22) MMTC licenses will be available in the April 2023 application round!

The OMMU will begin accepting applications from April 24th, 2023, until April 28th, 2023. The five (5) day window to submit the application will start from Monday (April 24) at 9:00 AM (EST) to Friday (April 28) at 5:00 PM (EST).

The Application fee will be \$146,000.00, and a renewal fee of \$1,332,124.42.

Some of the general applicant requirements are as follows:

- Five (5) Year Florida Business Registration
- Certified Financial Statements
- FDACS Certification
- \$5 Million Performance Bond
- Secured Premises
- Strong Diversity Plan

• Level 2 Background Screenings

Due to the high application fee and numerous statutory requirements, our team anticipates the OMMU will receive approximately one hundred (100) applicants in the first round for the coveted twenty-two (22) MMTC licenses. With the steady increase in all aspects of Florida’s Medical Marijuana Industry and the deadline to apply in the first batch set forth by the OMMU, now is the time to ensure your spot in Florida’s billion-dollar market.

Efforts To Legalize Recreational Marijuana in Florida

As more states begin the journey to recreational or adult-use, Florida has taken the spot as the largest and most lucrative medical marijuana state in the country, garnering over \$1 billion dollars in revenue. Due to its vast population and prominence as a tourist state, there is no question that Florida’s next steps into the recreational market could lead Florida to becoming the largest marijuana market in the country.

Although Florida maintains a 6% state sales tax, if the recreational market regulations implement an increased tax like other states such as Colorado have, there is no question that Florida will be a top competitor against California and Washington. As a result of its promising future in the adult-use market, there is no wonder that current licensees are pushing toward legalization, so they can become the top contenders in Florida’s ever-flourishing industry.

According to News 4 Jax, support for recreational marijuana has increased by 12% since November 2019. As a result of the favorable changes, and initiatives filed

in September 2021 and August 2022, the possibility of the legalization of recreational cannabis could find its way on the 2024 Ballot. The 2021 initiative legalizes cannabis for adults aged twenty-one (21) or older for personal use, to possess, use, process, transport marijuana, marijuana products and marijuana accessories, permits cultivating nine (9) live marijuana plants per adult with eighteen (18) plants maximum per household. The 2022 initiative (from Smart & Safe Florida) allows for adults twenty-one (21) years or older to possess, purchase, or use marijuana products and marijuana accessories for non-medical personal consumption by smoking, ingestion, or otherwise.

Further, this initiative allows Medical Marijuana Treatment Centers, and other state licensed entities, to acquire, cultivate, process, manufacture, sell, and distribute such products and accessories. Two signature thresholds are needed for the 2022 initiative to have a ballot position – to meet the necessary statewide total signatures, and Congressional District signature totals in at least fourteen (14) of Florida’s twenty-eight (28) Congressional Districts. The statewide goal of 891,589, is halfway completed, totaling approximately 416,933 valid signatures. The Congressional District goal for each district can be viewed here. (<https://dos.elections.myflorida.com/initiatives/initSignDetailCounty.asp?account=83475&seqnum=2&ctype=CSV&elecyar=2024>)

Once these signature thresholds are met, 60% of Florida voters need to express their interest in legalizing recreational marijuana by voting “Yes!” in the November 2024 election.

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Insa

Insa is a vertically integrated, independent cannabis company. Founded in 2013, the Company was started in Springfield, MA – home to its co-founders (and best buds), Pete Gallagher and Pat Gottschlicht. Dedicated to making its patients' good days even better (through cannabis), Insa was recently named the most awarded brand in the HighTimes MA Cannabis Cup. The Company specializes in every step of the cannabis process, from sourcing to growing to creating and dispensing meticulously crafted products that suit everyone's unique needs. Insa offers a cannabis experience that's trustworthy and effective, personal and hand-crafted. Insa has retail stores in Massachusetts and Florida. In addition to the stores currently open in Tampa and Clearwater, the company plans to open eight more stores in 2022 with locations in Hudson, Jacksonville, Lake Placid, Largo, Orlando, Tallahassee, The Villages and Tampa (N Dale Mabry). To learn more about Insa please visit www.insa.com.

Trulieve

Trulieve is the first and leading medical cannabis company in the state of Florida. At Trulieve, we strive to bring you the relief you need in a product you can trust. We offer an extensive variety of premium medical cannabis products to meet our patients' needs. Our plants are hand-grown in a facility with a controlled environment specially designed to reduce unwanted chemicals and pests, keeping the process as natural as possible at every turn. With over 70 locations statewide, including Miami, Kendall, Deerfield Beach, and Fort Lauderdale, Medical Marijuana Patients in the Miami-Dade area can be sure there is a Trulieve dispensary nearby. We also offer convenient delivery options, including free delivery for patients over the age of 65. For natural relief you can rely on, visit us at Trulieve.com.

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DocMJ

DocMJ was started in August 2016 as a small group of physicians saw the need for affordable, direct patient access to medical cannabis recommendations under the Amendment 2 guidelines. Check out our Pricing page for our current options.

DocMJ Values - We're big believers in the virtues we live and work by — empathy, compassion, and kindness. We're here to support patients in getting the help they deserve as quickly as possible. We strive to accomplish that in the most effective way possible. **Our Mission** - We aim to bring affordable medical marijuana recommendations to qualified patients across the state of Florida. We work tirelessly to be the most convenient, streamlined, and cost-effective solution for Floridians, and our mission is to provide the highest quality of care in the process.

Check us out at www.DOCMJ.com or call (888) 908-0143

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