

Hawaii selects businesses for medical pot but not to actor

April 29 2016, by By Marina Starleaf Riker

Hawaii selected eight businesses Friday to open medical marijuana dispensaries—but not one owned by Woody Harrelson.

The actor was among nearly 60 Hawaii residents who applied in January to open the state's first medical marijuana dispensaries. Dispensaries can open as soon as July 15.

Ina Treciokas, a spokesperson for Harrelson, said there was no comment on the selection announcement.

A four-member panel reviewed nearly 66 applications to open dispensaries based on criteria including companies' proof of financial stability, ability to comply with security requirements and being able to meet patient needs.

The panel wouldn't discuss Friday why they selected and rejected particular dispensaries, but the health department said it expects to release the scores of each applicant in the next two weeks.

Aloha Green Holdings Inc., Manoa Botanicals and TCG Retro Market 1 were selected to open dispensaries on Oahu. Hawaiian Ethos and Lau Ola were chosen for the Big Island, while Maui Wellness Group and Pono Life Sciences Maui were selected on Maui.

One company, Green Aloha, was selected to open dispensaries on Kauai.

"It's a feeling of huge responsibility and potential for doing good, so it's lots of emotions," said Richard Ha of Lau Ola, one of the companies selected for the Big Island. "We're really happy to participate in this, but we got to do this right and we fully intend to do that."

Ha said his company already has a lease on a property and building plans for facilities, but he expects that the dispensary won't be up and running until at least after July.

Video game entrepreneur Henk Rogers of Blue Planet Healing was among dozens of applicants who weren't selected for a license. Rogers is famous for designing the video game "Tetris" more than 20 years ago, and lives in Hawaii in an entirely solar-powered home.

"We look forward to applying for a medical marijuana dispensary license in the future should the Department of Health decide that the granting of additional licenses to operate a medical marijuana dispensary is in the best interest of the people of the state of Hawaii," Blue Planet Healing said in a statement.

Dispensary applicants are required to pay a \$75,000 licensing fee to the Department of Health within seven days of receiving written notice of their selection.

Applicants were required to have \$1 million cash, plus \$100,000 for each dispensary location. The Hawaii Department of Health, which awarded the licenses, must inspect facilities before they can open.

The law allows medical marijuana businesses to have two production centers and two retail dispensaries, for a total of 16 dispensaries statewide.

Six are allowed on Oahu, four on Hawaii Island, four on Maui and two

on Kauai.

Hawaii became the first state to legalize medical marijuana through the legislative process 16 years ago. Under a law passed in 2015, the state could grant eight licenses.

Industry experts say Hawaii's [medical marijuana](#) businesses could be confronted with challenges unlike those in other states, such as navigating rules that ban inter-island transport and limit the number of growers.

They say the new Hawaii industry could also face problems such as the nation's highest electricity costs for indoor growing and a thriving underground market.

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Citation: Hawaii selects businesses for medical pot but not to actor (2016, April 29) retrieved 23 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-04-hawaii-businesses-medical-pot-actor.html>

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