

First medical marijuana dispensary opening in Hawaii

August 8 2017, by Cathy Bussewitz



This undated photo provided by Maui Grown Therapies shows medicinal cannabis grown in the dispensary's production centers in Upcountry Maui, Hawaii. Dispensary sales of medical marijuana in Hawaii are beginning after patients waited 17 years for a legal way to purchase the drug. Maui Grown Therapies was the first dispensary in the state to sell medical marijuana to patients. (Maui Grown Therapies via AP)

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patients waited 17 years for a legal way to purchase the drug.

Maui Grown Therapies received approval from the Department of Health to begin selling medical cannabis Tuesday.

The dispensary sold medical marijuana to patients for two hours Tuesday, limiting their hours to help manage the new process, said Teri Freitas Gorman, director of community relations and patient affairs.

"Clearly this is a historic day not just for Maui but for the state of Hawaii," Freitas Gorman said. "This is the first time in Hawaii that patients will be able to buy lab-tested, quality-assured medical cannabis from a state-licensed dispensary. We're so excited."

The Maui dispensary pre-registered patients and began selling medical cannabis to patients by appointment only. They made 22 transactions and there were some software glitches, but patients were very excited, Freitas Gorman said. Marijuana was sold for \$20 per gram and \$90 to \$125 for a quarter-ounce, depending on the strain. Walk-in sales will start in about a week.

"This is an important day for qualified patients and caregivers on Maui who now have assurance the medical cannabis they purchase at Maui Grown Therapies has been thoroughly tested and is safe for them to use," said Virginia Pressler, director of the state Department of Health, in a statement. "Implementing a new health program is always challenging, and the dispensary program was no exception."



This undated photo provided by Maui Grown Therapies shows the dispensary's sales room in Kahului, Hawaii. Dispensary sales of medical marijuana in Hawaii are beginning after patients waited 17 years for a legal way to purchase the drug. Maui Grown Therapies was the first dispensary in the state to sell medical marijuana to patients. (Maui Grown Therapies via AP)

Hawaii was among the first states to legalize medical marijuana in 2000. But the state didn't legalize dispensaries until 2015, so the state's 18,000 patients had to grow or obtain the drug on their own.

Hawaii granted licenses to eight medical marijuana dispensaries throughout the Hawaiian islands last year. Several dispensaries began growing and harvesting the product, but they were unable to sell it because until recently the state had not certified a lab.

Honolulu-based dispensary Aloha Green was inspected Tuesday by the Department of Health and later announced it would open for sales Wednesday.

The dispensary says the price will include costs unique to Hawaii, including high electricity prices, lab testing, substantial taxes and a delay in sales for over a year.

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