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* * * **PRESS RELEASE** * * *

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Huizar's Cap of 70 to be Included in Council's Medical Marijuana Ordinance

New limits guarantee that the City will have fewer medical marijuana dispensaries than it did before 2007 moratorium

LOS ANGELES (Dec. 8, 2009) – The Los Angeles City Council is set to vote on a Medical Marijuana Ordinance Wednesday that will set a cap of 70 dispensaries, while allowing for active dispensaries that registered with the City before a November 2007 moratorium the opportunity to come into compliance under the new ordinance within 180 days.

Of the 186 dispensaries that registered before the moratorium, there are an estimated 137 still in operation. Many of those dispensaries would be unable to meet the new regulations at their existing locations due to other expected restrictions favored by the majority of the City Council, such as one that requires collectives to be at least 1,000 feet from schools, parks, places of worship and other sensitive-use areas.

Over the last two years, an estimated 900-1,000 mostly illegal dispensaries opened by exploiting a loophole in the City's hardship exemption process under its Medical Marijuana interim control ordinance. Tuesday's vote ensures that Los Angeles will have fewer dispensaries in operation than before its moratorium went into effect.

"Today we took the first step in regaining the trust of the residents of Los Angeles by protecting the integrity and safety of our communities while honoring the spirit of the Compassionate Use Act and offering medical marijuana to those who truly need it," said Councilmember José Huizar, who also introduced amendments forbidding individuals from operating more than one collective, ensuring early notification for Neighborhood Councils, and capping the number of dispensaries at 70 in order to effectively monitor dispensaries and remove black market influence and profiteers.

The ordinance is expected to allow the 137 pre-ICO dispensaries the opportunity to continue to operate for up to 180 days while they come into compliance. If fewer than 70 are able to come into compliance, other collectives may apply to open, but the maximum number would not exceed 70. The City Council would be able to modify that number at a later date if necessary.

The City Council also adopted Councilmember Huizar's proposal to locate the dispensaries in the City's 35 Community Planning Areas, according to their respective population density, in order to prevent over-concentration in any one neighborhood, while ensuring reasonable access for qualified patients.

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