



Newsletter, July 2015

Medical Marijuana Dispensaries and Civil Protections Bills Become Law

Victories for Hawaii's Medical Marijuana Patients and Caregivers

On Tuesday, 14 July 2015, Hawai'i residents and the Drug Policy Forum of Hawai'i secured major victories when two of our key priority pieces of legislation were signed into law by Governor David Ige. Act 241 (HB321) establishes that a medical marijuana dispensary system be set up across Hawai'i as early as July 2016. For specifics on this long-awaited legislation, [please see our FAQ](#) and [this recent op-ed](#).

In addition, the civil protections of the growing number of patients - now also to include those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) - and their caregivers were strengthened with the enactment of Act 242 (SB1291). Going forward, discrimination of medical marijuana patients and their caregivers by schools, landlords and courts in medical care or child custody cases will be prohibited.

The Drug Policy Forum of Hawai'i and our sister organization the Drug Policy Action Group were instrumental and played a leading role on the long, winding road as both of these bills made their way to the Governor's desk. We worked closely with the Department of Health (DOH) as well as with elected officials Representative Della Au Belatti and Senator Will Espero among

many others. Together with our allies--the ACLU of Hawai'i and most importantly the patients and caregivers-- we were part of the State Medical Marijuana Dispensary Task Force, whose final recommendations closely mirrored what eventually became law.

Going forward, DPFHI pledges to work with DOH to ensure that the upcoming dispensary system will be as accessible and inclusive as possible.

Below are some photos of patients, caregivers and physicians with Governor Ige. More can be seen on [the Governor's Flickr page](#).



Patient Maile in her mother's arms, surrounded by family and Governor Ige



Caregivers Ona Kahookano & Dana Ciccone, Governor Ige, Dr. Clif Otto, patient Terri Heede

Good Samaritan/Medical Amnesty Law Signed by Governor Ige



Earlier this month [Governor David Ige signed SB982](#), the Good Samaritan or Medical Amnesty bill, which will help save the lives of overdose victims. By providing a limited legal immunity (e.g. for possession) for those seeking medical assistance for someone who may have had an overdose, Hawai'i now joins scores of other states in making it easier to call for help and save lives. The Drug Policy Forum of Hawai'i was very supportive of this bill, and we are very grateful to allies at [the CHOW Project](#) and Senator Chun-Oakland for leading this effort.

Other News:

DPFHI is busy preparing for the 2016 legislative session, focusing on a whole host of drug policy reforms from increasing availability of Naloxone to help overdose victims, to changing asset forfeiture laws and reforming the criminal justice system to reduce the devastating impact that the failed War on Drugs is having on low income families, especially in communities of color.

Alohas and Mahalos:

There has been a change at the helm of DPFHI as Rafael Kennedy bids farewell and Carl Bergquist takes over as Executive Director.

From Rafael:

Aloha friends and supporters,

Many of you already know that I will be leaving the Drug Policy Forum of Hawaii, and the state, to pursue new opportunities in Washington DC. I have been grateful for the opportunity to work with all of you, and to do something as fascinating and important as this. We have accomplished a great deal together, and while I look forward to new things, I will miss the state of Hawaii, and the wonderful people that I worked with here.

I will be leaving the organization in the capable hands of Carl Bergquist, and I am glad that he gets to begin his work here with so much support and so many exciting new opportunities for the organization. I have tremendous faith in his ability, and look forward to reading stories about the things that all of you are able to accomplish in the coming years!

Mahalo and Aloha,
Rafael Kennedy

From Carl:

Aloha,

I am thrilled to have been given the opportunity to take over the reins at the venerable Drug Policy Forum of Hawai'i. Together with our esteemed Board, our organizer Wendy Gibson and our irreplaceable volunteers, I look forward to standing up against the unjust "War on Drugs" while advancing progressive drug policies that benefit patients, the community and our state.

Due to the tireless work of our outgoing Executive Director Rafael Kennedy, it is my sincere belief that the transition will be as seamless as possible. On my first official day

on the job, I had the privilege of not only attending the state legislature's sine die session, but also of witnessing history in the making as HB321 near simultaneously passed the Hawai'i House of Representatives and the Senate.

After a 15 year wait, our state is at last on track to create a network of medical marijuana dispensaries to serve those who have cruelly and needlessly suffered in pain. Building on Rafael's work on the Task Force and then on the bill itself, I will participate in the Department of Health's rulemaking process to ensure that the dispensaries are as accessible as possible.

In addition to rekindling the fight to decriminalize cannabis, I am also excited about continuing to maintain DPFHI's broad focus on other drug issues, such as the plethora of collateral sanctions and increasing the availability of Naloxone to help combat the overdose epidemic. In addition, I hope to incorporate my previous work advocating for immigrant rights into our battle. Many drug laws were drafted to target communities of color, including immigrants who are often subjected to the double whammy of incarceration and then deportation. As with all else in the "War on Drugs", this punitive approach results in traumatized keiki and broken families.

I particularly look forward to working alongside the native Hawaiian ohana and seeking guidance on what it sees as priorities for Hawai'i.

Mahalo nui loa!

Carl Bergquist is a proud resident of O'ahu along with his partner Jenjira Yahirun, who is a researcher at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and their 22 month old daughter Ariya Svea.



DONATIONS:

In order to help DPFHI continue growing as Hawaii's leading advocacy organization for sensible, compassionate and effective drug policies, we need your help! We at DPFHI would be thrilled to make a presentation about our work, please reach out to us via the contact information below.

Drug Policy Forum of Hawai'i

E-mail: info@dpfhi.org

Tel: (808) 853 3231

Please consider making a tax deductible contribution to our organization either using PayPal button below or via check.



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Honolulu, HI 96810

Or if you do not need a tax deduction, please consider donating to The Drug Policy Action Group, the 501 (c) (4) lobbying arm of DPFHI.



Please make all checks payable to "Drug Policy Action Group" and mail them to:

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Mahalo nui loa!