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ADMINISTRATIVE & FINANCIAL SERVICES

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DIRECTOR

April 10, 2020

Dear Stakeholder:

The Office of Marijuana Policy (OMP) was established within the Department of Administrative and Financial Services on February 4, 2019. This significant milestone—occurring one month after Governor Mills was sworn into office—was the first concrete step towards implementing the voter-approved and legislatively-amended Marijuana Legalization Act.

One of the first tasks our new office undertook was to develop a mission statement, a vision statement, and five guiding principles to define what we aimed to accomplish as the newest agency of state government. If you're not familiar with them, I invite you to view them on our website: <https://www.maine.gov/dafs/omp/about/mission-vision-values>.

There are several key themes contained in our mission, vision, and values. Most notable among these are protecting the public's health and safety, the importance of transparency and communication, and the goal of developing a good faith partnership with those we license and regulate.

Since our creation, we have worked diligently to foster an environment of mutual respect. We have aimed to listen and be respectful to anyone with ideas that may contribute to the success Maine's marijuana programs. Most importantly, we have kept our promises to a public and industry that have waited years for an avenue to legally access and sell adult use marijuana and marijuana products.

Early last year, we committed to submitting our adult use rules to the legislature before they adjourned in June 2019. We did. With that important step complete, we operationalized those rules and promised to begin accepting adult use applications by the end of 2019. We did. With that key milestone successfully attained, our attention shifted to launching Maine's adult use industry in spring 2020.

If you had asked me a month ago if anything could have stopped our progress, I would have balked at the suggestion. The team we have assembled at OMP has worked tirelessly throughout the last year to overcome any obstacle that would have delayed the launch of the adult use marijuana program. We have managed every potential roadblock within our control and have worked with our fellow state agencies, towns and cities, industry members, and the Maine Legislature to overcome others.

**Just one month ago, as we announced the issuance of Maine's first conditional licenses for adult use marijuana establishments, few would have envisioned the effects the current coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) would have on the daily lives of Mainers. However,**

**it now appears as though a spring launch of Maine’s adult use industry is simply unrealistic.**

Several communities preparing for local authorization and to opt-in for adult use—most notably those that serve as hosts to our prospective marijuana testing facilities—have now had to postpone those actions because of COVID-19, and rightfully so. The other issue in this unfortunate situation are the sheer unknowns. Public health experts have clearly communicated that they cannot answer what social distancing or other guidance may be in effect as we approach late spring and early summer.

Additionally, we have heard from towns and cities, public officials and the general public that they expect that when the adult use program is rolled out, it will be done in a manner that is best in the nation at protecting the public’s health and safety. OMP will not sacrifice those standards.

We are simply unable to provide any concrete timelines in these uncertain times. We cannot tell you with any level of certainty when towns will be able to take action to ensure there will be adequate testing to meet the needs of program, and we certainly cannot set a definitive retail sales launch date amidst a public health pandemic.

Despite this, please know that OMP is continuing to operate at full capacity to be ready for when the day comes. For example, in partnership with the team at Metrc, we recently completed user acceptance testing, deployment certification, and have moved Maine’s track and trace system into a live production environment. OMP also continues to accept applications and issue conditional licenses, establish a compliance program that will monitor the industry, and develop rules and regulations for a successful implementation, when it comes.

We know that you may be among the hundreds of small Maine businessowners entering the adult use industry that have invested—or are preparing to invest—into those marijuana businesses. This is why we felt it was so important to communicate the uncertain nature surrounding the timing of Maine’s adult use launch as promptly as possible.

While our work at OMP began just over a year ago, starting from scratch, we understand that many view the timeline in terms of the three years and five months that have passed since Maine voters approved the Marijuana Legalization Act. With that in mind, we will continue to do everything within our power to ensure a timely launch of this new industry.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to reach out to the office. We can be reached via the following:

- **Online:** <https://www.maine.gov/dafs/omp/>
- **Email**
  - Licensing: [licensing.omp@maine.gov](mailto:licensing.omp@maine.gov)
  - Compliance: [compliance.omp@maine.gov](mailto:compliance.omp@maine.gov)
- **Phone:** (207) 287-3282
- **Mail:** 162 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333-0162
- **Stay Connected:** <https://www.maine.gov/dafs/omp/about/stay-connected>

As always, we will aim to keep you apprised of future developments related to the work of the office and the impacts of COVID-19. We appreciate your understanding during this most difficult time for our state and nation, and we look forward to working with you over the coming months to rollout Maine's adult use marijuana program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erik Gundersen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Erik Gundersen  
Director