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The following statement by Kristi Kelly, Executive Director, Marijuana Industry Group, is being released in response to a Thursday, Feb. 23, 2017, announcement by White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer that the Department of Justice was going to target recreational marijuana businesses.

“Marijuana Industry Group supports the will of the voters of the state of Colorado, and the legitimacy of the medical and recreational programs. The Colorado cannabis programs are heavily regulated, heavily taxed, and heavily enforced by state and local governments. Resources are better spent pursuing illegal cartels than state- and locally-licensed, tax-paying business operators. We believe in upholding the tenets of the Cole Memorandum.

We see this as a state’s rights issue. Colorado’s medical and recreational cannabis markets are firmly entrenched in the state’s constitution, as well as a complex statutory and regulatory framework. The total economic impact of Colorado’s cannabis market was over \$1.3B in sales which represents over \$3B in economic impact and approximately 20,000 direct jobs in 2016, and \$199M in taxes in fees, the vast majority of which came from recreational marijuana. This money was allocated to public school construction projects and public health and safety priorities. Deconstruction of this market would likely cause a recession in the state. Colorado Governor Hickenlooper has further affirmed that he sees issue of marijuana as a state’s rights issue. Further, 71% of Americans would oppose a federal crackdown on of legal marijuana, according to a recent Quinnipiac poll.

Deconstruction of the legal market feeds cartels. Marijuana Policy Group’s 2016 report explained that the majority of the growth in the Colorado medical and recreational cannabis markets was due to a transition of customers into lawful markets. Removing a legal option creates a chasm in the marketplace that will drive customers back into illegal markets, putting money into the pockets of cartels.

Recreational customers also use cannabis for medical purposes. Colorado is one of the few states with the ability to see the two models exist side-by-side. The reality for many is that the recreational product, while taxed at a higher rate, is often undistinguishable from the medical product to customers. That is because many medical users opt out of the medical registry, choosing to be unregistered. Privacy is important to people. They may prefer anonymity due to their profession, their veteran status, or as a member of a licensed trade.”

About Marijuana Industry Group (MIG)

Marijuana Industry Group (MIG), the leading cannabis trade association for Colorado’s licensed businesses, was founded in 2010 by cannabis business owners and supporters to help craft Colorado’s earliest medical marijuana regulatory framework – which was the world’s first licensed, taxed and regulated model. MIG has cultivated strong relationships at the highest levels of state and local government, allowing for real-time education, access, and advancement of practical policy. As the oldest and largest trade association in the state, MIG represents the interests of, and advocates on behalf of, the rapidly evolving needs of the leaders of regulated marijuana industry in Colorado.

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