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TRUCE's Response to the UMA Press Conference

Salt Lake City, UT, January 19, 2017 - The Utah Medical Association (UMA) held a press conference on January 17, challenging the belief, held by most Utahns, that cannabis holds medicinal value.

Bill Hamilton, former UMA president, claimed that marijuana cannot be medicine since it is not an FDA approved substance. He went on further to claim that "Anecdotal stories do not medicine make" while comparing the medical benefits of cannabis to those of "bath salts or alcohol."

We disagree with this claim, and unfortunately for the UMA so does the data. Medical cannabis, including the whole plant form, continues to earn its place among leading medicines with proven benefits. Abundant scientific evidence establishes cannabis' value as medicine capable of treating many conditions as documented through research conducted at Harvard, Columbia, UCSF, the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and many other research organizations. In the US, there are currently 28 states with full medical cannabis programs, offering whole plant access to their now **millions** of patients.

The California Medical Association (to name one of many) - with decades of experience - has endorsed cannabis.¹ Are we to believe the CMA is less informed than the UMA?

On average, 24 opioid overdose deaths occur in Utah every single month. Zero deaths have been attributed to cannabis, a fact verified by the CDC. Utah ranks #4 in the nation for drug poisoning deaths, and 1/3 of Utahns over the age of 18 have been prescribed an opioid pain medication in the last 12 months.

Deaths from opiate abuse are dropping by 25-33% in cannabis legal states². Opioid-related deaths largely stem from prescription drug abuse. Medical cannabis would save the lives of an estimated 95 Utahns/year. This illustrates that the UMA is not lobbying for patient or public safety. Is there a more important agenda than saving suffering patients from unnecessary deaths?

We believe the UMA's stance is hurting Utah patients who are fighting debilitating illnesses. These are patients who are missing real benefits from access to medical cannabis.

The UMA's efforts would be better spent working to reduce the medical harm caused by the prescription drug epidemic facing America today. Repeating incomplete and incorrect theories trivializing legitimate forms of relief for patients serves nobody.

For an extended version of this press release please go to <http://truceutah.org/newsroom/>

¹ <http://www.cmanet.org/news/detail/?article=cma-urges-legalization-and-regulation-of>

² Colleen Barry of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health - JAMA Internal Medicine

TRUCE is a non profit organization focused on educating the community about the benefits of medical cannabis as a tool for minimizing patient suffering and as a legitimate alternative to opioids. For more information please visit our website Truceutah.org or follow us on Facebook or Twitter.

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