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June 30, 2022

Standardizing Cannabis Lab Testing Nationally

As the legal cannabis market continues to expand, and potential federal legalization and inevitable interstate commerce loom on the horizon, it is imperative that federal agencies address the discrepancies among state testing requirements and develop a standardized testing regime. Adoption of national standards will advance public health and safety goals while also facilitating interstate commerce of safe cannabis products.

In this white paper, the National Cannabis Laboratory Council (NCLC) proposes a unified approach to testing based on both data from participating laboratories and scientifically recognized standards. There is a need to transition from a state variable testing program to a harmonized testing scheme to create a baseline for quality testing of cannabis products and allow for interstate commerce while the industry transitions to risk-based testing programs designed by the cultivators and manufacturers. The group further suggests setting national standards governing (1) standard test panels setting forth specific compounds to include in an analysis, (2) sampling requirements and testing methodologies, and (3) lab accreditation and proficiency testing requirements.

About the National Cannabis Lab Council

The National Cannabis Lab Council (NCLC) was formed in 2021 by the law firm of Perkins Coie and numerous lab scientists and operators from around the country. The purpose behind the coalition is to establish and promote national lab testing standards for cannabis products, prior to legalization. The establishment of national standards will necessarily create a pathway for interstate commerce of cannabis products once cannabis is legalized. Without national standards, different lab testing requirements that currently exist at the state level will impede interstate commerce. Promulgating national standards will also protect public health by making certain that testing for certain pesticides, elemental impurities, and other dangerous additives will be consistent throughout the United States.

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