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For Immediate Release

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Will Florida be the Next Pot Shop Capitol?

(St. Petersburg, FL) As other states struggle to deal with the unintended consequences of legalizing marijuana under the guise of medicine, Florida Senator Jeff Clemmons proposes a bill that could put the state in the same pot shop chaos as California and Colorado.

Florida's proposed legislation allows for the establishment of marijuana farms and dispensaries to sell and deliver marijuana under the guise of medicine. It would also allow for the personal possession of up to 4 ounces and cultivation of up to 8 marijuana plants for registered individuals.

"There is no reason to believe that Florida's experience will be any different from what happened in California," warns Amy Ronshausen, executive director of the Florida Coalition Alliance. "The current proposed legislation does not limit the number of pot shops that can be opened or place zoning restrictions on where they can set up shop."

Dispensaries are easy marks for criminal activities because of valuable marijuana crops and large amounts of cash. Operators of dispensaries have been attacked and murdered by armed criminals both at their storefronts and at home. Common secondary byproducts related to dispensaries include: drug dealing, sales to minors, loitering, heavy vehicle and foot traffic in retail areas, increased noise, and robberies of customers just outside the facilities.

"How can we successfully educate and prevent kids from using marijuana when, if this proposed legislation is passed, it is likely they will walk or drive past a shop with neon pot leaves in its windows, advertising and encouraging its use?" asks Ms. Ronshausen.

Marijuana is not approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), so its use is unregulated. This has significant implications for patient care, as there are many health risks associated with marijuana use.

Past evaluations by several Department of Health and Human Services agencies, including the FDA, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and National Institute for Drug Abuse, found that no sound scientific studies supported medical use of crude marijuana for treatment. Further, no animal or human data supported the safety or efficacy of it for general medical use. Our protection as consumers relies on the rigorous approval criteria of the Food and Drug Administration and marijuana should not be exempt from this process.

"We are not denying there is medicinal value in cannabinoids, but smoked crude marijuana is not modern medicine. Cocaine and Opium both have medicinal properties physicians are not recommending patients to snort a line of cocaine or smoke opium. Medical marijuana should go through the same FDA process" concluded Ms. Ronshausen.

If you would like to set up an interview about this issue with Amy Ronshausen or another member of the Florida Coalition Alliance, please contact Ms. Ronshausen at **(727)686-0774**.

Florida Coalition Alliance, Inc. was established in September, 2008 by the leaders of various coalitions across the state who recognized the need for a member organization that could provide impartial representation and assist in the capacity building of all coalitions across the State. The mission of the Alliance is to build upon the foundations of community coalitions in Florida by providing opportunities for training, networking, communication, collaboration, legislative advocacy, sharing of resources and resource development. For more information please visit <http://flcoalitionalliance.org>