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Subject: The lies and deceit against
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5 small firms pledge not to fire workers for using medical marijuana

<http://www.trbimg.com/img-56b51632/turbine/ct-companies-with-pot-policies-0205-biz-201602-001/750/750x422>

While some barriers exist for employees who use medical marijuana, some companies have pledged not discipline those with prescriptions.

(Seth Perlman / AP)

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<mailto:aelejalderuiz@chicagotribune.com?subject=Regarding:%20%225%20small%20firms%20pledge%20not%20to%20fire%20workers%20for%20using%20medical%20marijuana%22> Chicago Tribune

With all the concerns confronting Illinois' medical cannabis pilot program — not enough patients, not enough qualifying conditions, not enough time — a handful of Chicago-area employers want their workers to know that they don't have to worry about job security.

Five small companies — a law firm, a real estate services firm, two health care organizations and a nightclub — have announced their intentions to support employees who use medical marijuana. It's a tangled topic across the country, with state laws permitting pot use clashing with federal laws that don't, and employers seeking to balance employee needs and rights against workplace safety.

Feliza Castro, founder of The Healing Clinic, which helps people register for cannabis cards, and Justice for Patients, a nonprofit advocacy group, recruited the companies to go public with their decisions in hopes that they will set an example for others to follow.

"The best way to support the nondiscrimination of these employees and to support reasonable HR policies that are inclusive of these patients is to go ahead and announce it," said Jonathan Spero, CEO of InHouse Physicians, one of the companies on Castro's list.

InHouse Physicians, a health care solutions company based in St. Charles that employs about 250 people, has added language to its human resources handbook to accommodate employees' medical pot use, including while they're at the office, Spero said.

It states that employees will not be subject to any disciplinary actions for using cannabis while on the job as long as they have a current, legitimate medical cannabis card, he said.

Spero, who has been helping Castro's Healing Clinic recruit physicians for over a year, said employees will be subject to the same performance requirements, so if the type of cannabis they use does have psychoactive effects that hurt day-to-day performance, there could be consequences.

<<http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-shrm-marijuana-at-work-survey-1215-biz-20151214-story.html>>

Employers tighten drug policies in face of pot legalization

<<http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-shrm-marijuana-at-work-survey-1215-biz-20151214-story.html>>

But he doesn't want to know what medications his employees are taking, seeing it as a violation of privacy rights.

Attorney Stuart Krauskopf, who employs 12 people at his River North law practice, said his employees' health is a priority, and anything they need to do to be comfortable is fine with him.

"It is based on complete mutual respect, and the idea is that I don't have to interfere in their well-being," said Krauskopf, who has Crohn's disease and understands what it is like to be in pain, though he has elected not to join the medical marijuana program.

His firm does not have a formal drug policy and will address issues as they arise on a case-by-case basis, Krauskopf said, though he expects he won't permit people to use marijuana while at the office, in case clients drop by. As for concerns about potential legal consequences if mistakes are made and blamed on an employee's impairment, he said he isn't worried, because nothing gets sent to clients without his seeing it first.

<<http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-medical-marijuana-workplace-0823-biz-20150820-story.html>>

Why medical marijuana can still get you fired in Illinois

<<http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-medical-marijuana-workplace-0823-biz-20150820-story.html>>

The other companies on Castro's list are Chicago-based chiropractic company Universal Wellness Source, River North nightclub Lite Chicago, and Highland Park-based Frontline Real Estate Partners.

Castro, who sought out local companies across several industries, said it was difficult to find companies to publicly announce what she calls "compassionate policies," even if they have them in place.

She hopes the initial five encourage others to follow suit. The most common question she receives at The Healing Clinic is whether a medical marijuana card will protect a patient from getting in trouble at work.

The short answer is that it does not. Illinois' statute gives employers the flexibility to determine whether and how to accommodate employees who use medical marijuana. While companies cannot discriminate against anyone for having a patient card, they can still impose drug tests and fire people who fail them, regardless of their card-carrying status.

Lawsuits filed in other states protesting terminations for legal medical marijuana use have tended to go in favor of employers.

Dina Rollman, founding partner of Rollman and Dahlin, a recently launched