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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PHARMACISTS OPPOSE MEDICAL MARIJUANA ACT

LITTLE ROCK, AR (Oct. 15, 2012) – The Arkansas Pharmacists Association (APA) opposes the “Arkansas Medical Marijuana Act” that will appear on the November 2012 ballot. Because the Act does not use the skill and education of pharmacists and because it creates a direct conflict with federal law, APA opposes this Act as it is currently written.

“The APA believes that if marijuana is legalized in Arkansas, pharmacists should be the healthcare professionals who dispense the medication, not unlicensed, untrained individuals who work in ‘marijuana dispensaries,’ ” said APA Executive Vice President Mark Riley. “Pharmacists are highly educated healthcare professionals who understand the pharmacology of medications, including marijuana. There are Arkansas licensed pharmacies in 74 of Arkansas’s 75 counties providing access for patients throughout the state.”

Arkansas pharmacies and pharmacists are highly regulated by the Arkansas State Board of Pharmacy. The Board provides regulatory oversight that establishes the process for dispensing legitimate prescriptions in Arkansas, as well as the storage and security regulations that are required of pharmacies in the state. The non-profit dispensaries that would be created by the passage of the Act would not be regulated by the State Board of Pharmacy, nor would they be regulated in such an elaborate manner. With lack of such extensive oversight, patient safety and the security of the drug itself may be in jeopardy.

In addition, passage of the Act would place Arkansas squarely at odds with the United States Drug Enforcement Administration regulations that classify marijuana as a Schedule I controlled-substance. If Arkansas wishes to legalize marijuana, then the first step should be to pursue DEA regulatory changes to declassify marijuana as a schedule I controlled substance.

APA’s position on the “Arkansas Medical Marijuana Act” should not be construed as directly supporting or opposing the legalization of marijuana; rather, the position reflects directly the question that will be placed before Arkansas voters in November.

The Arkansas Pharmacists Association, founded in 1882, is the statewide professional association representing approximately 2,200 pharmacists in Arkansas. APA strives to further the professional advancement of pharmacists, advocate the value of pharmacy, and safeguard the health and well-being of every Arkansan. Its mission is to advance a professional and business environment for Arkansas pharmacists to be successful and fulfilled in serving patients.

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