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PRESS RELEASE

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Consumers Welcome Federal Cannabis Rescheduling—But Dispensaries Stand to Gain the Most

Today's announcement from the U.S. Department of Justice and Drug Enforcement Administration marks a long-overdue shift in federal cannabis policy, moving certain marijuana products into Schedule III of the Controlled Substances Act.

From a consumer perspective, this is a meaningful and positive step forward, but it is not the sweeping reform many Americans may assume.

The new rule applies specifically to FDA-approved cannabis-derived drugs and marijuana products operating under state medical marijuana licensing systems. While this signals growing federal acceptance of cannabis' medical value, it does not broadly legalize marijuana or eliminate the complex patchwork of state and federal rules that consumers still face.

For patients and consumers, the benefits are real but incremental. The rescheduling acknowledges that cannabis has accepted medical use and a lower risk profile than Schedule I substances. It may also open the door to more research, better product standardization, and increased physician comfort in discussing cannabis-based treatments.

However, the biggest immediate winners are not consumers; they are licensed cannabis businesses, particularly dispensaries.

By moving qualifying cannabis products to Schedule III, state-licensed operators may no longer be subject to the punitive federal tax rule under Section 280E, which previously prevented them from deducting ordinary business expenses. This change could dramatically improve profitability for dispensaries and reshape the economics of the industry overnight.

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Consumers, on the other hand, should temper expectations. Prices may not drop right away, access will still depend on state law, and non-medical cannabis products remain largely unchanged under federal law. Additionally, products that are not FDA-approved or not part of state medical programs may still face stricter treatment.

“This is progress—but it’s targeted progress,” said Arizona NORML State Director Julie Gunnigle. “Patients deserve recognition, and this move helps validate their experiences. But the reality is that the largest and fastest benefits will be felt by businesses operating within the licensed system.”

The federal government’s action also reinforces the importance of state-regulated markets. The rule explicitly integrates state medical marijuana licensing systems into the federal framework, signaling continued reliance on dispensaries as the primary access point for legal cannabis.

For consumers, that means the future of access, affordability, and product quality will still largely depend on how states regulate and how dispensaries respond to their newfound financial flexibility.

In short, today’s decision is a win. But it is not the finish line.

Consumers are gaining recognition.
Dispensaries are gaining leverage.

And the broader fight for equitable, accessible cannabis reform continues.

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