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Former Gov. Ronnie Musgrove, hospital executives launch Medical Marijuana testing business

Magnolia Tech Labs intends to file Application for Certification

JACKSON, Miss. – Former Gov. Ronnie Musgrove and a hospital executive team have announced the formation of Magnolia Tech Labs – a state of the art testing facility to service Mississippi’s new medical marijuana industry.

The people of Mississippi overwhelmingly passed a referendum to allow Cannabis to be used medicinally for patients with a wide variety of health concerns. The Legislature codified their wishes this year. The Mississippi Department of Health has set June 1 as the first day for all medical marijuana businesses -- growers, dispensaries and testing facilities – to file applications for certification.

Quentin Whitwell and Dr. Kenneth Williams, in connection with Nashville partner Bappa Mukherji, have developed a comprehensive health care system in underserved areas of the North Delta region. Over the years a friendship with Gov. Musgrove evolved. “Governor Musgrove’s roots are where we have planted our healthcare flag, and his experience has brought a common bond. We share a passion of helping communities that were losing their hospitals,” said Whitwell. “Musgrove had been involved in the trade association that helped the get the initiative passed. No one was really talking about safety testing of the product at that time, and we knew that was going to be a very necessary part of the public trust in the industry.”

Musgrove is the former chairman of the U.S. Health and Human Services Department’s Committee on Rural Health. He has served as visiting Health Care Policy Fellow at Johns Hopkins University’s Bloomberg School of Public Health. “Having a background in state government, I knew that testing needed to be a closely held public-private partnership that would service both the public and the industry. When we started talking with the Mississippi Department of Health about what testing should be required, they came to fully understand why this was so important to bring credibility to the industry.”

Whitwell is a former Jackson City Council member. He is currently chairman and CEO of Progressive Health Systems, Inc., a not-for-profit hospital organization doing business at Panola Medical Center, Quitman Community Hospital and Alliance Healthcare Systems. Patient safety and results for better health are the goals in everything he involves himself in at this point in his career.

“Voters in Mississippi and the Legislature passed this law under the assumption that the industry would produce a product that is safe and effective,” said co-founder Whitwell. “The people who have worked so hard to make this industry a reality in Mississippi – and the patients who are depending on this product -- deserve to have confidence that the product is safe from pesticides, heavy metals and other pollutants. They also expect that every time they use that product, it does what their doctors tell them it will do.”

Williams is a doctor of internal medicine in Holly Springs. In 1999, he purchased Alliance Health Systems in Holly Springs when the hospital was in danger of closing. He received his medical degree from Meharry Medical College School of Medicine and has been in practice for more than 20 years.

The combined experience of these founding members expects to set the standard for medical marijuana testing in Mississippi.

“This is very personal to me,” Gov. Musgrove added. “I had several conversations with my late wife, Melody, before she passed away last year from leukemia. She knew that cannabis would have helped her with pain from her disease and from the side effects of her cancer treatment. I want to be involved in this industry and help it grow so that people across our state will not have to suffer like she did.”

“The Hippocratic oath clearly states, ‘first do no harm,’” said Dr. Williams. “For doctors to comfortably and confidently prescribe cannabis to their patients, they must be rock solid in the knowledge that the product they are prescribing is healthy, safe and effective. Quality testing will help bring that confidence not only to doctors across our state, but to their patients as well.”

For more information about Magnolia Tech Labs, go to www.MagnoliaTechLabs.com, or contact George Shelton at (479) 236-7473.

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