

U.S. Hemp Roundtable

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May 19, 2022

John Perkins
Director
Center for Verification and Evaluation
Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington, DC 20420

Re: U.S. Hemp Roundtable Opposition to VA's Decision to Deny Veteran-Owned Small Business Certification to Hemp Business

Dear Director Perkins:

I serve as general counsel to the U.S. Hemp Roundtable, the hemp industry's leading national advocacy organization. Hemp is legally recognized as an agricultural commodity and distinguished in federal law from marijuana. That is why the Roundtable was dismayed when the Center for Verification and Evaluation denied verification as a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business to Holistic Serendipity LLC dba Native Ceuticals Tampa's, a business that sells legal hemp products. Given that there is no group of Americans more deserving of the economic opportunities posed by the hemp industry than our nation's veterans – the men and women who put themselves in harm's way to protect our freedoms -- the U.S. Hemp Roundtable implores the Center to reverse its decision.

The Center based its denial, in significant part, on the incorrect belief that Holistic Serendipity sells illegal marijuana. None of the submitted information or documentation indicates that Holistic Serendipity sells marijuana. In fact, the Center's denial letter concludes, "Based on the documentation submitted and online research, the applicant sells **hemp** derived products" (emphasis added).

Hemp is not marijuana, but rather is non-intoxicating and a legally and scientifically distinct subspecies of the cannabis plant. As you may know, the 2018 Farm Bill—federal law for more than three years—legalizes the production of hemp throughout the United States, removes hemp and tetrahydrocannabinols in hemp from the federal controlled substances schedules, and protects hemp and hemp products in interstate commerce. The federal legality of hemp, including all derivatives, extracts, and cannabinoids of the plant, is not in question.

Moreover, the Consolidated Appropriations Acts since enactment of the 2018 Farm Bill have barred federally appropriated agencies from using federal funds to prohibit the transportation, processing, sale, or use of hemp. The Center's unfortunate decision to deny certification to a business that sells legal hemp products is inconsistent with Congress's clear intent to incentivize, promote, and protect hemp production and hemp products, and possibly violative of federal law.

To be clear, the Roundtable thanks the Center for the important role it plays in veteran assistance. It is because of this important role—and the Roundtable's strong belief that no qualified business should be unfairly denied certification—that the Roundtable urges the Center to reverse its decision, which, if maintained, will deny benefits to veteran-owned hemp businesses and deny consumers access to legal hemp products.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Miller
General Counsel
U.S. Hemp Roundtable

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2022 U.S. HEMP ROUNDTABLE

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