



Connected marijuana lobbyist to push for program's future

BY CARLA K. JOHNSON | JULY 8, 2015

CHICAGO (AP) — A new group has formed to push for policies in Springfield favorable to the medical marijuana industry with a **well-connected former Illinois Department of Agriculture employee as its top lobbyist.**

Bresha Brewer stopped being a state worker just ahead of new ethics rules imposed by Gov. Bruce Rauner that would have prevented her from immediately going into lobbying and becoming part of a “revolving door” of former state employees who leave to become lobbyists. Brewer is now executive director of the Medical Cannabis Alliance of Illinois, which launched this week.

With Brewer's involvement, the group hopes to play an influential role as lawmakers determine whether medical marijuana has a future in Illinois.

The alliance represents 39 companies — the bulk of the businesses that hold state permits to grow and sell marijuana in a pilot program that expires after 2017. Extending the program's end date, or preferably achieving its permanence, will be one of Brewer's most urgent objectives.

As executive director, she brings fresh insider knowledge, nearly 15 years of state government experience and a long list of connections. Brewer has worked for several state agencies as a legislative liaison, most recently for the **agriculture department, which regulates marijuana growers.**

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Besides pushing to make the pilot program permanent, the alliance will lobby for eliminating fingerprint background checks for patients, which the industry sees as an obstacle that is keeping patient numbers low, said spokeswoman Kim Morreale McAuliffe. The group will do more than lobbying **and will undertake public education about medical marijuana throughout Illinois,** she said. ■

Entire article here: <http://goo.gl/tVFG10>

Illinois Can't Afford Pro-Pot Policies

