

CALIFORNIA'S LEGAL CANNABIS MARKET: WELL TESTED. STRICTLY REGULATED.

California's legal cannabis market operates within a strict framework of regulatory oversight, scientific bodies and track and trace system at the state and local level that establish multiple layers of consumer protection and regulatory accountability. This infrastructure was expressly designed to deliver the safest available product to consumers.

Conversely, sellers operating outside of the legal market do not adhere to any of the state's testing, tracking or regulatory mandates. Products sold through the illicit market [can contain unknown additives](#) and untested, untraceable chemicals making them a clear threat to public safety.

The Licensed Market: Expansive & Stringent Regulatory Oversight

The legal cannabis market is regulated by three statewide bodies as well as local authorities in each city and county. The statewide regulatory entities include:

- The [Manufactured Cannabis Safety Branch \(MCSB\)](#), housed within the California Department of Public Health, licenses and ensures the safe operation of commercial cannabis manufacturers;
- The [Bureau of Cannabis Control](#), housed within the California Department of Consumer Affairs, licenses and oversees retailers, distributors, third-party testing laboratories and microbusinesses; and
- [CalCannabis](#), housed within the California Department of Food & Agriculture, licenses cultivators and implements the state's Track-and-Trace system.

Science Drives Safety: Comprehensive Testing Requirements for Legal Operators

California's cannabis testing requirements are grounded in science and represent some of the highest levels of scrutiny across consumer facing products. To reach the shelves, all products must be analyzed by [state licensed and regulated third-party testing labs](#) that test for more than 400 potential contaminants to evaluate safety and quality, including:

- Potency
- Pesticides
- Microbiology
- Residual Solvents
- Terpenes
- Moisture
- Mycotoxins (Fungus)
- Heavy Metals
- Foreign Materials

From Seed to Sale: The Track and Trace Database Follows Cannabis

California operates a statewide "[track-and-trace](#)" system that records in real time the inventory and movement of cannabis products through the supply chain from seed to sale. This system records every single component of every product moving through California's legal market. Should public health concerns arise, the state can trace that product back to its origin, hold the product in the system and alert regulators until all concerns are addressed.

Outside of the regulated market, there is no way of knowing where a product came from or why it might be harmful.

Limiting Access to the Legal Market Will Push Californians to a Dangerous Illicit Market

The state has issued 873 licenses for legal retailers. These retailers sell products that have passed California's stringent testing requirements and are traceable at any point in time.

Meanwhile, [an estimated 3,000 illegal retailers](#) are operating outside the confines of the law. Not held accountable by the strict regulatory structure of the state, illegal operators are finding ways to cut corners and reduce costs, creating [dangerous counterfeit products](#) with cheaper additives – the safety of which is unknown.

Shutting off access to legal products will not curb consumption. It will instead funnel Californians to illegal retailers where they can access products. But the product contents will be unknown, untested and untraceable. This all or nothing approach will not solve the current crisis and could pose increased risk for consumers entering the illicit market.

Now is the time for leaders to work together to develop an approach that will truly keep Californians safe.