



Summary of 2020 Medical Marijuana Reform Legislation

Backed by a new grassroots group, the Medical Marijuana Patients Coalition, Rep. Scott Slater (D) and Sen. Josh Miller (D) have introduced legislation, [H 7621 and S 2544](#), to implement significant reforms to Rhode Island's medical marijuana program.

The proposal would create a hardship program to reduce the cost of medical marijuana for patients who qualify as low-income. It would also dramatically reduce licensing fees for compassion centers, prohibit discrimination against patients by state agencies, and remove the ban on people with prior drug felonies from owning or operating a medical marijuana business.

Here's a quick summary of the proposed legislation:

- Directs the Dept. of Health to establish rules to create a hardship designation for patients who receive SSI, SSDI, or Medicaid or who apply in writing for hardship designation for other reasons.
- Tasks the Dept. of Business Regulation with creating regulations for Compassion Centers to establish a discount medicine program for patients with a hardship designation. Patients with a hardship designation would receive at least a 30% discount on the total cost of products from Compassion Centers (before taxes are applied).
- Eliminates the plant tagging system for patients and caregivers who cultivate their own medicine.
- Removes the numerical limit on the number of licenses for Compassion Centers and instead requires the Dept. of Business Regulation to accept applications on a rolling basis and issue licenses until there is at least one Compassion Center for every 1,000 registered patients.
- Changes the definition of a debilitating medical condition to “any serious health condition a practitioner believes, based on their experience, knowledge, and reasonable judgment as a health care provider, could be treated or alleviated with the use of medical marijuana.”
- Prohibits state agencies and employees of the Rhode Island government from discriminating against patients solely for their use of medical marijuana or status as a patient and requires all official rules, regulations, and policies issued by state agencies to make reasonable accommodations for patients' medical marijuana use.
- Reverts the annual Compassion Center license fee to the original amount of \$5,000.
- Eliminates the 4% Compassion Center surcharge applied to medical marijuana sales.
- Imposes October 1, 2020 as date after which all products sold by Compassion Centers must be tested by third-party laboratories.

- Removes ownership and employment discriminations against people with prior drug offenses on their records.
- Permits patients who cultivate their own medicine to securely store up to 16 ounces of useable marijuana in their residences.