



Medical Cannabis and South Carolina

Thousands of seriously ill South Carolinians and their families are depending on the General Assembly to enact compassionate medical cannabis legislation. The South Carolina Compassionate Care Act (S. 366/H. 3660) would allow patients with debilitating medical conditions and a doctor's certification to access medical cannabis from regulated facilities.

Cannabis' Safety and Medical Value Has Been Proven

- Although the federal government has created unique obstacles to clinical research into cannabis' benefits, studies have shown cannabis' value in treating serious medical conditions and symptoms, including neuropathic pain, wasting, and Crohn's disease.
- Research has shown patients enrolled in medical cannabis programs can reduce or eliminate their use of opiate-based painkillers.
- On January 12, 2017, after reviewing more than 10,000 scientific abstracts, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine released a report that found evidence cannabis or cannabinoids are effective for treating symptoms including chronic pain, chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting, multiple sclerosis spasticity symptoms, and PTSD symptoms. It found no link between smoking cannabis and lung cancer, no physiological "gateway" effect, and no link between cannabis use and mortality, overdose deaths, or occupational accidents.
- Prescription drugs often come with far more serious side effects than cannabis, and many patients simply do not respond to them. Administering cannabis with a smoke-free vaporizer or as a sublingual tincture is a much more effective delivery method than taking pills for many patients, especially those suffering from severe nausea.
- Opiates and methamphetamine may be legally administered to patients. Why not cannabis, which has a far lower risk of dependency and does not cause fatal overdoses?

Broad, Bipartisan Support for Medical Cannabis

- 72% of South Carolina residents, including 63% of Republicans, support allowing medical cannabis. (2018 Benchmark Research poll)
- Voters have approved medical cannabis in some of the most conservative states in the nation, including Utah, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and North Dakota.
- 69% of police officers support allowing medical cannabis. (Pew Survey, January 2017)
- The American Nurses Association, the American Public Health Association, the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, and the American Academy of HIV Medicine support allowing medical cannabis.
- 76% of doctors would approve medical cannabis. (*New England Journal of Medicine*, 2013)

Federal Law Does Not Stand In the Way

- The decision to classify cannabis as a Schedule I drug was a political decision by Congress.

Nothing prohibits states from having penalties that differ from federal law.

- Since 2014, Congress has included a rider to the Department of Justice funding bill to prevent it from intervening in medical cannabis states.
- A federal appellate court ruled that the federal government cannot punish — or even investigate — physicians *recommending* the medical use of cannabis to patients.

Thirty-Three States Have Laws Protecting Patients

- Two-thirds of Americans live in a state that allows the medical use of cannabis.
- These laws are working well, enjoy strong support, and are protecting patients.
- Data have shown that concerns about these laws increasing youth cannabis use are unfounded: Teen cannabis use rates have remained stable or decreased in most states.