

Medical Cannabidiol Program Renewed

Medical Cannabidiol Act – On the last day of session the House and Senate sent to the governor a bill, which I supported, that expanded as well as extended the current medical cannabis law. The current Medical Cannabidiol program decriminalized possession of medical cannabidiol oil and in order to use it, it required a patient with intractable epilepsy to get a card issued by the Dept. of Public Health that would allow that patient's neurologist to "recommend" the use of medical cannabidiol. This law was scheduled to sunset in July.

We removed the sunset date and expanded the conditions/diseases for which cannabidiol would be allowed to be used, according to best practices in the 28 states in which it is currently legalized. Besides intractable epilepsy, medical cannabidiol would now be able to be used for cancer or any terminal illness with a probable life expectancy of under 1 year if there is severe or chronic pain, nausea or severe vomiting, or severe wasting; MS with severe and persistent muscle spasms; seizures; AIDS or HIV; Crohn's disease; ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease; Parkinson's disease; and medically untreatable pain.

It also allows a doctor, not just a neurologist, to make a "recommendation" to a patient and it creates a Medical Cannabidiol Advisory Board to recommend changes to the Board of Medicine of the conditions/diseases cannabidiol will be allowed to treat. The cannabidiol can only be used in oil or pill form and smoking it is still prohibited. The cannabidiol cannot contain more than 3% THC, which is under the amount in marijuana necessary to get a person "high". THC is the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana that causes the "high".

Bids from businesses will be considered by the state for in-state manufacturing and dispensing cannabidiol and from bordering-state, out-of-state sellers. They will be required to pay a license fee and be highly regulated, to include security procedures, employee standards, and quality control of the product. The program will be self-funded as state tax dollars were not appropriated for it.

Based on the preliminary clinical trials already conducted as well as anecdotal evidence, I am hopeful that some patients will be able to be safely and effectively treated for their particular condition/disease with the passage of this bill.

Here are my reservations: I am still concerned about how slow the federal government has been to respond to this needed change and that we are bypassing the FDA process already in place to research safe and effective medicines and the current conflict it presents between state and federal law. Concerns in this regard have been expressed to our federal delegation. That said, we have received indications from the Trump administration that they plan to let the state medical cannabis laws alone. Plus, I have a concern about the possible unintended consequences of compromising the health and safety of some patients as we move forward with the science and the research not yet being entirely clear. And I certainly do not want to see teens believing that the passage of this bill means that medical cannabis is a “safe” drug to use because it is certainly not. Nor do I want to see the legalization of recreational use.

Overall, I am hopeful the federal government and the FDA will “catch up” to bring this drug into “mainstream” medicine like the prescription drugs we have so patients can get it at pharmacies and take advantage of its benefits with some assurance of the protections of scientifically backed research and quality control in place. And I certainly did not want state government standing in the way of some patients getting the help they need.

Passed by Legislature in the Last Week

Defunding Abortion Providers – For the first time since the ‘70’s, with the passage of this year’s budget, the state has cut off its partnership with abortion providers in Medicaid funding and in the Iowa Family Planning Network (about half the taxpayer dollars abortion providers receive), leaving more dollars for the many other options currently available to women for family planning services in those provider networks. Work will continue in this important area.

Mental Health Funding – Counties will be allowed to equalize mental health property tax levy rates within their region. Iowa has 14 mental health and disability services regions, all of which are required to offer a basic level of core services. Iowa law has an overall mental health funding cap of \$114 million, which remains in place. However, Iowa law also has limited how much each county is able to levy. The amounts have varied greatly between counties within a region. This change merely shifts the funding between counties so they are equalized and some counties do not “subsidize” other counties, as in the case Bremer County has been “subsidizing” Johnson County and Black Hawk County has been “subsidizing” Butler County.

3rd Grade Retention and Summer School Reading Program – We repealed the state conditional requirement to retain students in 3rd grade as well as the summer school reading program requirement.

Career Technical Education Follow-Up Bill – HF 648 was intended to address concerns Vocational Agriculture teachers had with the CTE bill passed last year.

Cameras in Bathrooms – This bill prohibits cameras in public-owned areas where people have a reasonable expectation of privacy, such as bathrooms. This is intended to address a situation in Johnson County where a public library installed cameras in its bathroom areas.

Passing the FY 18 State Budget

The legislature adjourned on April 22, 2017 with a week filled with passing the budgets under the agreed upon FY 18 state budget target of \$7.245 billion, which is about \$18 million less than the FY 17 revised state budget. This represents a real reduction in government spending not a smaller increase. This budget takes a responsible and thoughtful approach to spending in recognition that revenue may continue to come in less than anticipated. This approach to managing the state budget is just like the way families and businesses manage theirs, having to set and manage priorities. There were difficult reductions to make, but they were necessary to ensure a balanced budget.

Feel free to contact me with ideas, thoughts, and concerns. My phone is 319-987-3021 or you can email me at sandy.salmon@legis.iowa.gov . I want to hear what you are thinking and will listen to your input. Together we will work to make a difference for the future of Iowa. Thank you very much for the honor of representing you!

Sincerely,

Sandy