



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB587 - Health Care Facilities - Use of Medical Cannabis – SUPPORT

Senator Antonio Hayes

March 9, 2023

Good Afternoon Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

We are here today requesting your support of Senate Bill 587 which would allow a qualifying patient with a valid written certification to consume medical cannabis within the health care facility if the patient is receiving non-emergency medical care at the health care facility, subject to specified requirements, prohibitions, and exceptions.

As Maryland moves forward with the legalization of recreational cannabis, one important aspect has been missed – allowing patients to have access to their medical cannabis – their medicine – when they enter a healthcare facility for treatment. In 2017, the Maryland Medical Cannabis Commission intended for this to be allowed as new laws were passed and even put regulations in place to do so. At this time, it is critical that we prioritize the rights and access for qualifying medical cannabis users.

So, what does SB587 do?

- **Allows Increased Access to Medical Cannabis:** Patients who require medical cannabis to manage their symptoms or condition will have access to their medication even while receiving medical care at a health care facility.
- **Improved Quality of Life:** Medical cannabis has been shown to alleviate symptoms of many conditions, including chronic pain, nausea, and anxiety. Allowing patients to consume medical cannabis while receiving medical care can improve their quality of life and comfort levels.
- **Reduced Risk of Adverse Drug Interactions:** Some medications can interact negatively with medical cannabis. Allowing patients to consume their medical cannabis within the health care facility under medical

supervision can reduce the risk of adverse drug interactions. If patients are sneaking in medical cannabis, this bill would allow for transparency between the patient and their doctor which would minimize the risk of adverse drug interactions.

- **Enhanced Patient Autonomy:** Patients should have the right to make choices about their medical care, including the use of medical cannabis. This bill provides patients with the autonomy to manage their symptoms with medical cannabis if they have a medical certification and choose to do so.
- **Reduced Stigma:** Allowing patients to consume medical cannabis within health care facilities can reduce the stigma associated with medical cannabis use. This can promote better communication between patients and healthcare providers and ultimately improve patient care.
- **Opioid Harm Reduction:** Medical cannabis has been shown to be effective in managing chronic pain, which is a common reason for opioid use. By allowing patients to use their medical cannabis in health care facilities, SB587 provides an alternative to opioid painkillers for certified medical cannabis users, which can help reduce the risk of opioid addiction and overdose. (Studies have suggested that medical cannabis use may be associated with a reduction in opioid use.)

What does SB587 not do?

- SB587 only applies to medical cannabis and does not allow for the use or possession of recreational cannabis in medical facilities.
- It does not permit the use of medical cannabis in all health care facilities. Health care facilities can choose to opt-out of the requirement to allow medical cannabis consumption, and patients cannot use medical cannabis in areas of the facility where it is not permitted.
- It does not allow patients to smoke medical cannabis. Patients are only allowed to consume medical cannabis through other forms such as edibles, tinctures, or vaporizers.
- It does not allow patients to possess or consume medical cannabis on the premises of the health care facility if they do not have a qualifying medical condition or certification from a healthcare provider.
- It does not allow hospitals or nurses to distribute or administer medical cannabis, it doesn't even involve hospitals to recommend medical cannabis. This specifically is for medical cannabis patients who already have a qualifying medical certification.

You will hear from the opposition that passing this legislation would remove funding as the Federal Government still classifies cannabis as a Schedule I drug, but this is simply not the case. We have seen a similar law passed in California with no funding revoked; and the Centers for Medicare Services even provided a letter that noted they had not seen any funding revoked where similar laws had passed. (Maine, Connecticut, Mississippi for a few similar examples.) (Similar legislation is currently being introduced in 16 other state legislations.)

As more states decriminalize cannabis and even create recreational markets, we must not forget to also update the books for the most important consumers of all—patients.”

For these reasons, I ask for a favorable report on SB587. Thank you.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Antonio L. Hayes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Antonio" being the most prominent part.

Senator Antonio L. Hayes
40th Legislative District – MD