

Sen. Erpenbach and Rep. Hesselbein: Introduce patient-focused medical cannabis bill

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(MADISON)- Today Senator Jon Erpenbach (D-West Point) and Representative Dianne Hesselbein (D-Middleton) circulated LRB 5981, a bill that would allow access to cannabis for medical use.

The bill recognizes that people should not have to engage in a criminal act to access medicine for debilitating conditions. It also recognizes the need to regulate the industry in order to provide a safe, legal path for people to obtain that medicine. We recognize that people don't want or need politicians dictating what form that medicine comes in or creating unnecessary, politically appointed entities to delay their care.

The proposed bill creates a tightly regulated process that requires a recommendation from a doctor with whom a patient has an established relationship. The bill also requires the Department of Health Services to create a registry system, and requires the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection to create a licensing system for growers, producers, and sellers to ensure safety and quality. Finally, the bill makes sure patients can access legally available medicine no matter where they live, even if it is far from a dispensary.

"Over the years, the best pieces of legislation that I have introduced have come from constituents. This proposal is the result of over 20 years of listening to constituents and advocates. We introduce this bill today in honor of all of the people we've worked with over the years-the veterans, teachers, mothers, fathers, cancer patients, grandmothers, grandfathers and so many others who have been denied legal access to medicine that could have improved their quality of life," said

Erpenbach.

While public support for medical use in Wisconsin, among Democrats and Republicans alike, has never been higher, there has not been an official legislative hearing on medical cannabis since 2009. Wisconsin is surrounded by states where people can legally access cannabis. It is time we take a step forward and pass a bill that works for our state.

“Passing this bill makes progress towards helping patients all over the state of Wisconsin. We know everyone on the political spectrum supports the medical use of cannabis, and this proposal is the first step to improving the lives of people with debilitating conditions. I hope that we can soon join the growing number of states that have already implemented this common sense proposal,” added Hesselbein.

Thirty-seven other states have a compassionate medical cannabis program. Wisconsin is so far behind. When 83% of the people in Wisconsin are in favor of a policy, it is past time for a stubborn few in the Legislature to get the job done.