

CO-SPONSORSHIP MEMORANDUM

TO: All Legislators
FROM: Representative Melissa Sargent
Representative Tod Ohnstad
Senator LaTonya Johnson
DATE: April 18th, 2019
RE: Co-Sponsorship of LRB-0154/1 relating to: legalization of marijuana
DEADLINE: Thursday, May 2nd, 2019 by 5:00 p.m.



This bill is related to marijuana possession, regulation of marijuana distribution and cultivation, medical marijuana, operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of marijuana, requiring the exercise of rule-making authority, granting rule-making authority, making an appropriation, and providing a penalty.

The people of Wisconsin have said loud and clear that the prohibition of marijuana is not working— the results of the recent November election showed that through [referenda across the state](#) voters were in overwhelming support of legalization. Additionally, in a recent [Marquette Law School Poll](#), over 60% of Wisconsinites believe that all marijuana sales should be taxed and regulated like alcohol sales. With this momentous and growing support for full legalization, it is clear that the people are ready for truly pragmatic and common sense action. By legalizing recreational marijuana in Wisconsin we will open the door to [countless family-sustaining jobs](#), have the means to regulate and tax marijuana to provide [abundant economic stimulus for our state](#), and address the [massive and egregious racial disparities in marijuana-related arrest rates](#). Wisconsin must act now in order to provide real relief for our friends and neighbors.

Time and time again Wisconsinites have shown their support for the full legalization of marijuana, and it is past time that we as state legislators listen to the voices of our constituents.

In light of this, today I am introducing a bill to fully legalize marijuana in Wisconsin. Thirty-Three states around the country—including ten states that have fully legalized—have listened to their constituents on this issue, and it's time for Wisconsin to do the same. These states are seeing tremendous benefits from legalization efforts:

- **Economic Benefits:** The math is clear— legalizing marijuana for recreational and medical use would provide extensive economic benefits to our state. Wisconsin has the opportunity to take in over [\\$138 million a year](#) in state taxes, and \$2.7 million a year in local taxes, in addition to creating upwards of [18,000 family supporting and sustainable jobs](#). Further, the legalization of marijuana would save the state money by reducing the amount of money spent on drug enforcement. According to an estimate by the [ACLU](#), Wisconsin stands to save \$44.3 million a year of taxpayer money through the legalization of marijuana.
- **Criminal Justice Reform:** [Over half of all drug arrests](#) are for marijuana, but these arrests are not evenly distributed. Although African-Americans use marijuana at the same rates as white individuals, they're almost four times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession nationally, and are [almost six times more likely to be arrested in Wisconsin](#). Too many lives and communities have been damaged by out of date and backwards cannabis policies— we can take important steps in rectifying these damages by creating a pathway towards full legalization.
- **Healthy Communities:** Legal access to marijuana has led to a [23% decrease in opioid dependence](#) and a 25% lower overdose death rate in states that have already legalized, in addition to its ability to aid a variety of debilitating medical conditions and chronic pain management.

Meanwhile, Wisconsin is falling further and further behind, and has become an island of prohibition, hurting our farmers, our state's opportunity for economic growth, and Wisconsinites' rights to just and equitable cannabis policies. The most dangerous thing about marijuana is that it's illegal, and as more states legalize, and we continue to see new evidence to support legalization's various benefits, the more unjustifiable—and even foolish—it becomes to put off legalizing marijuana in Wisconsin.

It's time to adjust our state's attitudes towards marijuana, and towards criminal justice reform. We must make a positive change, and that's exactly what this bill provides. It's not just about legalizing marijuana—it's about legalizing opportunity in Wisconsin—and I hope you'll consider joining me in giving Wisconsinites what they want, and Wisconsin with what it needs.