



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 · MADISON, WI 53708

For immediate release:
September 20, 2019

For more information, contact:
Sen. Jon Erpenbach, 608-266-6770
Rep. Chris Taylor, 608-266-5342
Sen. Patrick Testin, 608-266-3123

Sen. Erpenbach, Rep. Taylor, and Sen. Testin Introduce Bill to Legalize Medical Cannabis in Wisconsin

The bill provides a legal path to vital medicine for those with debilitating illness

MADISON – Today, Senator Jon Erpenbach (D-Middleton), Representative Chris Taylor (D-Madison), and Senator Patrick Testin (R-Stevens Point) introduced bipartisan legislation to legalize medical cannabis in Wisconsin. The bill, which is the first bipartisan bill to legalize medical cannabis since 2001, 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.

Last fall, close to one million Wisconsin voters in 16 different counties and two cities, in both red and blue parts of the state, spoke loudly and clearly in support of medical cannabis. The people of Wisconsin are ready to join 33 other states in legalizing cannabis for medical use.

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.

Upon introduction of the bill, Senators Erpenbach, Testin and Representative Taylor, along with medical cannabis advocates, released the following statements:

“Each time we introduce this bill, more and more people around Wisconsin find that someone they know has turned to cannabis as a life-altering medical treatment,” said Senator Erpenbach. “The public support is there, we have a Governor who supports it, the time for medical cannabis is now.”

“Growing up, my grandfather was one of my heroes. I watched as cancer robbed him of his strength and vitality,” said Senator Testin. “I saw him make the decision to go outside the law to seek treatment with medical marijuana. It restored his appetite, and I believe it added months to his life. Doctors and patients, not government, should decide if cannabis is the right treatment.”

“It is long past time for state lawmakers to respond to the overwhelming call from the public to legalize medical cannabis in Wisconsin,” said Representative Taylor. “Nobody should be treated as a

criminal for accessing the medicine they or their loved ones need. This is a long overdue compassionate law that will finally allow sick patients to access the medicine they need.”

“My husband Josh and I see what cannabis is doing for children with Rett Syndrome in other states,” said Megan Lowe, whose 10-year-old daughter Norah suffers from Rett Syndrome, which causes severe impairments and seizures. “Their seizures are disappearing and they are gaining skills back, but why can’t Norah see the relief that they are seeing? A medical cannabis program in Wisconsin would mean that not only Norah, but thousands of other medically complex children, could have safe access to a therapy that works, so they can start enjoying just being kids.”

“My daughter Jessi was diagnosed with stage four breast cancer when she was 32 years old,” said Jeff Fitzrandolph. “We tried to work with conventional doctors who promoted chemotherapy and radiation to solve her problem. After six months all it did was make her sick, lose her hair and feel totally frustrated. We tried alternative treatments, some of which were positive. But ultimately we turned to cannabis oil and it was only then that she was able to get out of bed and live her life normally for the next six months. If we had found cannabis oil earlier in her diagnosis, I really believe she would have survived her battle with cancer.”

###