

MEDICAL CANNABIS IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Thousands of veterans and other South Carolinians with serious illnesses are depending on the General Assembly to enact compassionate medical cannabis legislation this year. The South Carolina Compassionate Care Act (S. 423) is a conservative bill to allow patients with certain debilitating medical conditions and a doctor's certification to access *non-smoked* medical cannabis preparations from therapeutic cannabis pharmacies run by a pharmacist-in-charge.

Medical cannabis works and is far safer than opioids.

- Although the federal government has created unique obstacles to clinical research into the benefits of cannabis, studies have shown cannabis' value in treating serious medical conditions and symptoms.
- In 2017, after reviewing more than 10,000 scientific abstracts, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine released a report finding evidence cannabis or cannabinoids are effective for treating symptoms including chronic pain, chemotherapy-induced nausea, and spasticity.
- Prescription drugs often come with far more serious side effects than cannabis, and many patients simply do not respond to them.
- While prescription opiates have resulted in tens of thousands of fatal overdoses in the United States, cannabis has not been shown to have caused any fatal overdoses. Research has shown that more than 60% of pain patients who use medical cannabis are able to reduce or eliminate their use of opiates.

There is broad, bipartisan support for medical cannabis, including veterans and clergy.

- Eighty-three percent of South Carolina residents support allowing medical cannabis, including 74% of Republicans and 84% of independents. (2024 Mason-Dixon poll)
- Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America found over 80% of its members support allowing medical cannabis. Numerous South Carolina veterans have spoken in support of passing the S.C. Compassionate Care Act. Among supportive veterans' organizations are Hidden Wounds (based in Columbia, S.C.), Veterans Alliance for Holistic Alternatives, and the Veterans Cannabis Project.
- Sixty-nine percent of police officers support allowing medical cannabis. (Pew Survey, 2017)
- Seventy-six percent of doctors would approve medical cannabis. (*New England Journal of Medicine*)
- Health and disease-based organizations that support allowing medical cannabis include the American Nurses Association, the American Public Health Association, the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, the Epilepsy Foundation, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, and the U.S. Pain Foundation.
- The Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church USA, the United Methodist Church's Board of Church and Society, and the Union of Reform Judaism all support allowing medical cannabis.

Federal law does not stand in the way.

- The decision to classify cannabis as a Schedule I drug was a political decision by Congress. The FDA has recommended reclassifying cannabis to Schedule III to reflect that it has medical value and a low to moderate potential of abuse.
- Nothing prohibits states from having penalties that differ from federal law.
- Since 2014, Congress has included a rider to the Department of Justice funding bill to prevent it from intervening in medical cannabis states.

Thirty-eight states have laws protecting veterans and other patients.

- Over 70% of Americans live in states that allow the medical use of cannabis.
- Some of the most conservative states in the country have medical cannabis laws, including Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, North and South Dakota, and Utah.
- These laws are working well, enjoy strong support, and are protecting patients.
- Data have shown that concerns about these laws increasing youth cannabis use are unfounded: Teen cannabis use rates have remained stable or decreased in most states.

For more information, visit SCCompassion.com.