

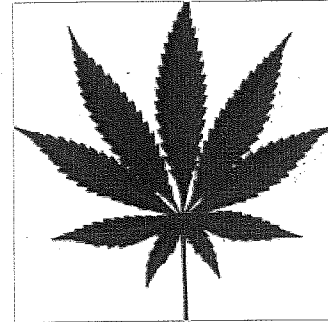


ILCAAAP

Illinois Church Action on Alcohol & Addiction Problems

March 25, 2014

Marijuana Action Alert



Committee passes bills lowering penalties for marijuana and expanding medical marijuana for children

The House Restorative Justice Committee passed two bills to lower the penalties for marijuana. HB 4299 makes the possession of 10 grams of cannabis a petty offense. The offense will not go on a person's criminal history, and he/she is not considered a criminal for possessing **10 grams of cannabis--approximately 25 joints**).

HB 4299 also lowers the penalty for the production or possession of 5 cannabis plants to a petty offense, with a fine not exceeding \$100. (One plant grown outdoors produces approximately 448 grams or 1 pound of marijuana, which is **approximately 1,120 joints**. One marijuana plant grown indoors produces approximately 224 grams of marijuana, making **approximately 560 "joints"**.)

HB 4299 lowers the penalties for the growing of 5-20 marijuana plants to a Class A misdemeanor. While this lowers the rate of prison time, the unintended consequences could be greater illegal production of marijuana.

HB 5708 lowers penalties for possession of marijuana to a regulatory offense, similar to a minor traffic offense or a petty offense, which is not reported or considered a criminal offense. Those who plead guilty or are convicted of a regulatory offense for cannabis will have their records sealed or expunged. The amount of cannabis a person can possess increased from 2.5 grams (approximately 6 joints) to 30 grams (approximately 75 joints). Possessing more than 30 grams up to 500 grams is lowered to a Class A misdemeanor from a Class 4 felony.

HB 5708 removes language regarding the harm about the negative effects of cannabis. The effects of daily cannabis use on teenage brains is worse than originally thought, and the long-term effects appear to be irreversible, according to new research from McGill University.

Memory loss, cognitive deficits, drops in IQ, and abnormal brain structures: are but a few of the neurotoxic effects that recent research has correlated to marijuana use in adolescents.

HB 5708 allows local government to enact an ordinance regulating or prohibiting the consumption of cannabis in public places **provided the penalty is not greater than for the**

public consumption of alcohol. Marijuana could be used in vapor pens in public places and go undetected.

SB 2636 passed in the Senate Public Health Committee. The medical cannabis pilot program is not yet operational, yet SB 2636 seeks to expand it for children under the age of 18 who have seizures. While we empathize with parents who are caring for children in these situations, we believe you should listen to the experts in the field and not rush to enact a law that might have long-term consequences that could harm these children. The Department of Public Health has the authority to expand the use of medical marijuana and should not be rushed through by Legislators.

The president of the American Epilepsy Society recently wrote about efforts to pass legislation for the use of marijuana to treat children with epilepsy.

"While there are a number of anecdotal reports of positive outcomes from a particular strain of marijuana used for treating patients with epilepsy, robust scientific evidence for the use of marijuana for treatment of epilepsy is lacking. The lack of information does not mean that marijuana is ineffective for epilepsy. It merely means that we do not know if marijuana is a safe and efficacious treatment for epilepsy.

In addition, little is known about the long term effects of using marijuana in infants and children on memory, learning and behavior. This is of particular concern because of both clinical data in adolescents and adults and laboratory data in animals demonstrating potential negative effects of marijuana and its derivatives on their critical neurological functions.

Such safety concerns coupled with a lack of evidence of efficacy in controlled studies result in a risk/benefit ratio that does not yet support use of marijuana for treatment of seizures."

The president of the American Epilepsy Society added: **"Healthcare professionals, patients, and caregivers are reminded that use of marijuana for epilepsy may not be advisable due to lack of information on safety and efficacy, and that despite 20 states legalizing the use of medical marijuana, it has not been reviewed and approved by the Food and Drug Administration for use in the treatment of any form of seizures or epilepsy."**

FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

Contact your State Representative (217-782-2000) (**[click here for a list of State Representatives](#)**) and ask him/her to Vote NO on HB 4299 and HB 5708 to lower penalties for growing and possessing large amounts of marijuana.

Contact your State Senator (**[click for a list of State Senators](#)**) and ask him/her to **Vote No on SB 2636.**

Contact the Governor by phone: 800-642-3112 or **[Click here to e-mail the Governor](#)**

PRAY

Forward to 10 others.