

Bipartisan PA Senators Claim Votes for Cannabis Legalization, Urge Governor's Support

Bipartisan Pennsylvania lawmakers express confidence that they have the votes to pass a marijuana legalization bill this year. Senators Dan Laughlin (R) and Sharif Street (D), along with Rep. Amen Brown (D), emphasized the need for Governor Josh Shapiro to engage across the aisle to ensure the bill's passage.

Tax Rate and Equity Issues

The proposed 20 percent tax rate for marijuana in the governor's budget is deemed too high by the lawmakers. There are also ongoing discussions about incorporating equity-focused provisions into the legislation, with GOP leadership showing more openness than expected.

Senate GOP's Shifting Attitudes

Laughlin noted that Senate Republicans' attitudes toward cannabis reform have softened over the past three years. He believes there is enough "quiet support" to secure the necessary votes, although some members from rural districts remain hesitant to publicly endorse the bill.

Timeline and Legislative Process

Street expressed optimism that a cannabis bill could reach the governor by the end of the session, with potential sales starting by July 2025. However, both lawmakers acknowledged that numerous issues still need to be resolved, and a vote might not occur until the Senate leadership feels ready.

Federal Influence

The potential federal rescheduling of cannabis from Schedule I to Schedule III under the Controlled Substances Act could impact state-level reform efforts. Senate President Pro Tempore Kim Ward (R) has indicated that federal descheduling would facilitate her comfort in advancing state legislation.

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