

Lawmakers Push to Grow Georgia's Medical Cannabis Access

Georgia Lawmakers Push to Expand State's Medical Cannabis Program

House Bill 227, recently passed by Georgia lawmakers in a 164-1 vote, seeks to amend the state's medical cannabis program. If enacted, the bill would remove the terms "severe" and "end-stage" from qualifying medical conditions, broadening patient access. The bill would also introduce Lupus as a qualifying condition and reframe "low-THC oil" as "medical cannabis," paving the way for improved physician and patient education.

Bill sponsor Rep. Robert Dickey, R-Musella, emphasized the need for doctors and patients to have greater discretion in determining when medical cannabis is appropriate.

Senate Bill 220 Proposes More Expansive Changes

While H.B. 227 primarily refines eligibility criteria, a more expansive proposal is moving through the Senate. Senate Bill 220, also titled the "Putting Georgia's Patients First Act," would not only achieve the objectives of H.B. 227 but also increase the state's THC cap from 5% to 50%. Additionally, S.B. 220 would legalize vaping and edible forms such as gummies, though it would continue to prohibit raw cannabis flower, pre-rolls, and cannabis-infused food items like cookies and candies.

Sponsored by Sen. Matt Brass, R-Newnan, the bill emerged from recommendations gathered during the Georgia Access to Medical Cannabis Commission's (GMCC) patient listening tour in late 2024. "There's a need for more fast-acting products," Brass stated. "Some of these patients need relief that doesn't take an hour or more to work."

S.B. 220 has bipartisan support, with backing from 10 Republicans and eight Democrats in the 56-member Senate. The bill advanced out of the Health and Human Services Committee on Feb. 26 and awaits a floor vote.

Possession Limits and Educational Provisions

A key amendment in S.B. 220 would replace the current 20-fluid-ounce possession cap with a 2-ounce limit, accommodating multiple product forms. The bill would also authorize the GMCC to conduct public education initiatives and permit licensed cannabis producers to outsource educational efforts, though direct advertising would remain banned.

"We learned in that listening tour that there needs to be more education out there," Brass noted. "A third party—such as an association—can educate the public, doctors, and patients, but not advertise specific brands."

Georgia's six licensed medical cannabis producers currently operate 15 dispensaries, with the potential for additional locations as the patient registry expands. As of December 2024, approximately 26,000 patients were registered in Georgia's program—a relatively low figure compared to other states.

Legislative Deadline Looms

For S.B. 220 to advance, the Senate must approve the bill before the state's March 6 crossover deadline, when legislation must pass out of its chamber of origin to remain viable this session. If passed, the bill could significantly reshape Georgia's medical cannabis landscape, providing patients with broader access and more treatment options.

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