

Rhode Island Bill Would Allow Medical Cannabis for Terminally Ill

Rhode Island Lawmakers Hear Testimony On Proposal To Allow Terminally Ill Patients To Use Medical Cannabis At Healthcare Facilities

On Wednesday, a Rhode Island House panel gathered to hear testimony regarding a new proposal aimed at allowing terminally ill patients to use medical marijuana within healthcare facilities. The legislation, House Bill 5630, is sponsored by Rep. Susan Donovan (D) along with nine co-sponsors, and seeks to establish a framework where certain healthcare facilities would allow terminally ill patients to use medical marijuana under specific guidelines. The bill was introduced with the intent to provide terminal patients with an alternative option for symptom relief, while still maintaining safety for all individuals within the healthcare setting.

H 5630 Bill Would Require Healthcare Facilities To Permit Cannabis Use By Terminally Ill Patients, With Specific Safety Precautions

If passed, House Bill 5630 would require that certain healthcare facilities accommodate terminally ill patients by allowing them to use medical marijuana while they remain within the facility. Smoking and vaping cannabis products would be prohibited, ensuring that only methods deemed safe for indoor use, such as edibles or tinctures, would be allowed. The bill mandates that healthcare facilities take precautions to protect other patients, employees, and visitors by setting clear guidelines for the storage and use of medical marijuana.

Rep. Donovan, who also chairs the House Committee on Health and Human Services, shared a poignant story during the hearing about a boy named Ryan, who suffered from cancer. Ryan was initially treated with opioids, which left him constantly sedated and unable to engage with his family and friends during his final days. After being transferred to a facility that allowed medicinal cannabis use, Ryan experienced a remarkable improvement, regaining consciousness and relief from pain. Donovan highlighted the importance of providing all terminally ill patients with similar access to medical marijuana as an alternative to traditional pain management methods.

Rhode Island Medical Cannabis Bill Would Provide Compassionate Care For Terminally Ill Patients, Easing Symptoms and Improving Quality of Life

The bill's goal is to ensure that terminally ill patients are able to use medicinal cannabis in a manner that complies with state law while providing them with the relief they need. Testimony during the hearing included support from various stakeholders, including representatives from the ACLU of Rhode Island, who emphasized that the bill would enable terminally ill patients to alleviate symptoms and improve their overall

quality of life. Supporters believe the measure would bring compassionate care to those in the most need, aligning with the goals of medical marijuana programs across the country.

Rep. Marie Hopkins (R) raised a question during the hearing regarding the bill's definition of "terminal illness." The bill defines terminal illness as a prognosis of one year or less to live, while Hopkins pointed out that the standard medical definition is often six months. Donovan assured the committee that she would review the definition and amend it if necessary to align with medical standards.

Support for H 5630 Grows As Compassionate Use of Medical Cannabis Gains Momentum Across The Country

Ellen Lenox Smith, co-director of the medical cannabis program at the U.S. Pain Foundation, also provided testimony in support of the bill, noting that similar legislation has already been introduced or passed in more than a dozen other states. She highlighted that while recreational marijuana has gained attention in Rhode Island, the needs of medical marijuana patients have often been overlooked. Smith expressed optimism that the bill would provide important relief for those suffering from chronic pain and terminal illnesses.

To qualify for the protections outlined in the bill, patients would need to provide healthcare facilities with proper identification, along with either a medical marijuana card or a physician's written recommendation for cannabis use. Importantly, chemical dependency recovery facilities would be excluded from the definition of "healthcare facility" under the bill's provisions.

Rhode Island Legislation Aims To Create Compassionate and Safe Environment For Terminally Ill Medical Cannabis Patients

Rep. Donovan also acknowledged during the hearing that the bill would need to be amended to exempt federal institutions, such as the Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities, from the cannabis provisions, due to federal law classifying cannabis as a Schedule I controlled substance. Furthermore, the bill allows healthcare facilities to suspend the use of medical marijuana if federal regulatory or enforcement actions were to take place.

While Rhode Island's cannabis industry continues to expand, with new regulations and rules taking effect on May 1, the state's lawmakers are actively addressing the needs of both recreational and medical marijuana users. In addition to the medical marijuana bill, Rhode Island has introduced legislation regarding psilocybin, aiming to provide access to therapeutic options for patients suffering from conditions such as PTSD and severe anxiety.

As Rhode Island's cannabis landscape evolves, the legislative developments surrounding terminally ill patients' access to medical marijuana reflect an increasing awareness of the potential benefits of cannabis as a medical treatment, and an ongoing commitment to compassionate care for the state's most vulnerable populations.

Email: info@cannabisriskmanager.com | Phone: +415-226-4060

© Copyright 2025 Cannabis Risk Manager. All Rights Reserved