

Florida Moves to Revoke Cards for Drug Crime Offenders

Florida Lawmakers Advance Provision That Could Strip Medical Marijuana Cards From Patients With Drug Convictions

A Florida legislative conference committee is advancing a provision that could significantly alter the state's medical marijuana program by revoking patient and caregiver registrations for individuals convicted of certain drug offenses. The measure, which has raised concerns among advocates and observers, would authorize the state to suspend or revoke access to medical cannabis for individuals merely accused or convicted of relatively minor drug-related offenses—including possession of as little as 10 grams of marijuana.

This policy shift is moving forward as part of SB 2514, a broader bill that initially passed both chambers of the state legislature in differing forms. The Senate version included the medical marijuana revocation language from the outset, while the House version did not. After a period of negotiation, House lawmakers have now agreed to the Senate's position, sending a clear signal that this controversial provision is likely to become law.

Under Proposed Rules, Registrations Could Be Revoked Even Before a Final Court Decision Is Reached

The proposed policy would empower the Florida Department of Health to revoke medical marijuana cards from qualified patients or designated caregivers if they are found guilty or plead no contest to certain drug offenses. More strikingly, the provision includes language that would allow for an immediate suspension of a patient or caregiver's registration simply upon being charged with an eligible offense.

The suspension would remain in place until the legal case reaches a final disposition, effectively stripping access to legal medical marijuana during what could be a lengthy judicial process—even if the individual is ultimately cleared of the charges.

While supporters argue the measure is about preventing misuse of the medical marijuana system, critics note that it blurs the lines between guilt and accusation and could leave legitimate patients without access to medication during critical periods.

Uncertainty Persists Over Whether the Law Would Be Applied Retroactively to Existing Patients With Past Offenses

One major question surrounding the proposed policy change is whether it would apply solely to future criminal cases or if it would be retroactively enforced. The legislation does not clarify whether the Department of Health would be required to audit existing patient and caregiver records to identify individuals

with past convictions that meet the criteria for revocation.

If applied retroactively, the measure could result in the suspension or termination of a significant number of registrations, particularly among individuals who previously used the black market before turning to the regulated program.

This would undermine one of the key rationales for medical marijuana legalization: bringing consumers into a legal, controlled environment where they can access safe, regulated products under medical supervision.

Provision Targets Low-Level Cannabis Offenses and Could Worsen Criminalization for Minor Conduct

The types of offenses that would trigger revocation are broad and include conduct such as purchasing more than 10 grams of marijuana or giving away up to 20 grams of cannabis without compensation. These are relatively low-level infractions that, in many jurisdictions, are decriminalized or considered civil violations rather than criminal offenses.

Including these behaviors under a framework that results in automatic suspension of medical access could disproportionately affect individuals who are already vulnerable—especially those who turned to the medical program in good faith after prior encounters with the criminal justice system.

The approach also risks increasing stigma and reinforcing punitive drug policies at a time when many other states are expanding access and shifting toward harm reduction and public health-focused strategies.

Broader Medical Cannabis Reform Efforts in Florida Have Faced Defeats in the Legislature This Year

The move to tighten rules around patient eligibility stands in sharp contrast to several failed attempts earlier this year to expand access to Florida's medical marijuana program. Proposed reforms that would have allowed home cultivation, broadened qualifying conditions, protected parental and employment rights, and waived fees for veterans all stalled in the legislative process.

Lawmakers opted instead to move forward with a more restrictive posture, focusing on punitive elements rather than patient protections or program development.

This legislative shift appears to be out of step with public opinion in the state, where polls continue to show strong support for both medical and adult-use cannabis legalization.

Parallel Efforts to Legalize Adult-Use Marijuana Are Underway for Florida's 2026 Ballot

While lawmakers continue to debate the contours of the state's medical program, advocates are mounting a fresh campaign to place adult-use marijuana legalization on the 2026 ballot. The group Smart & Safe Florida has already collected more than 370,000 valid signatures—well above the threshold needed to trigger a state Supreme Court review of the measure's legality and fiscal impact.

The new proposal includes adjustments based on critiques of the 2024 version, which failed to secure enough support at the polls. Among other things, the revised language clarifies that smoking and vaping marijuana in public places would be prohibited, and gives the legislature explicit authority to regulate the time, place, and manner of public cannabis consumption.

These changes are aimed at appeasing critics—including Gov. Ron DeSantis—who opposed the previous initiative over perceived gaps in regulatory oversight.

Governor DeSantis Continues to Cast Doubt on the Future of the Legalization Initiative

Despite the legal and structural adjustments to the 2026 measure, Gov. Ron DeSantis has expressed skepticism that the new initiative will withstand scrutiny from the Florida Supreme Court. He has characterized the proposal as being in “big time trouble,” despite having correctly predicted that the 2024 version would survive a challenge from the state’s attorney general.

The governor’s opposition is significant, given his influence over the legislature and judicial appointments. DeSantis has also signed legislation that imposes new restrictions on the citizen initiative process—reforms that could complicate efforts to get cannabis legalization on the ballot in future election cycles.

Still, polling suggests public support remains high, with majorities of Democrats, independents, and even Republicans backing adult-use legalization in recent surveys.

Cannabis Legalization Remains Politically Volatile as Florida Heads Toward 2026

In the background of these developments is the complex and often contradictory stance of national political figures like Donald Trump, who previously endorsed Florida’s legalization efforts but has since remained silent on the issue. Prior to the 2024 election, Trump expressed support for the now-failed adult-use measure and met with industry leaders involved in its promotion.

However, some GOP lawmakers have since claimed that the campaign misrepresented key provisions in order to gain political backing—a claim that reflects the ongoing tension between cannabis reform advocates and conservative lawmakers, even within the same party.

As the 2026 election approaches, Florida remains a bellwether state for marijuana reform nationally. The clash between legislative crackdowns on medical access and grassroots pushes for adult-use legalization illustrates the deep divides in how policymakers and voters view the future of cannabis in the state.

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