

Alabama Senator Criticizes State Medical Cannabis Commission Amid Legal Disputes

In a recent meeting of the Senate's General Fund budget committee, Sen. Greg Albritton (R-Atmore) expressed mounting frustration at the legal challenges facing the Alabama Medical Cannabis Commission (AMCC). The commission's ongoing litigation surrounding its licensing process has led Albritton to characterize it as a "money pit," citing increasing legal costs and a lack of resolution.

Commission's Legal Battles

At a Contract Review Committee meeting last Thursday, Albritton highlighted the growing number of lawsuits targeting the commission's licensing procedures. He emphasized the need for swift resolution, suggesting that legislative intervention might be necessary to address the situation effectively.

Commitment to Patient Access

Responding to Albritton's concerns, Brittany Peters, a spokesperson for the AMCC, reiterated the commission's dedication to making the state's medical cannabis program fully operational. Emphasizing the importance of serving patients who stand to benefit from medical cannabis, Peters underscored the commission's commitment to defending against legal challenges while urging collaboration with lawmakers to prioritize patient needs.

Legal Representation

During the meeting, the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries presented a new contract aimed at addressing the commission's legal challenges. The contract, totaling \$100,000 and spanning multiple years, will enlist legal representation from Gregg B. Everett, Esq.; Gilpin & Givhan, PC. The firm will advocate for Commissioner Rick Pate and the Department of Agriculture and Industries in various lawsuits related to the commission's activities.

Challenges and Legislative Efforts

The establishment of Alabama's medical cannabis program in 2021 aimed to address a range of medical conditions, from cancer to PTSD. However, legal hurdles have plagued the program's implementation. Licensing inconsistencies led to the retraction of initially awarded licenses, with subsequent rounds delayed by litigation over alleged violations of the Open Meetings Act.

Path Forward

Despite legislative efforts to address these challenges, such as SB 306 sponsored by Sen. Tim Melson, progress has been slow. With the legislative session drawing to a close and critical bills awaiting Senate votes, Albritton raised the possibility of discontinuing the program if the issues persist.

As Alabama navigates the complexities of establishing its medical cannabis program, the legal battles facing the AMCC underscore the challenges of implementation. While stakeholders remain committed to advancing

patient access, ongoing litigation and legislative gridlock pose significant hurdles to realizing this goal.

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