

New Hampshire Senate President Expresses Opposition to Cannabis Legalization Bill

Ahead of further consideration by the New Hampshire Senate this week of a House-passed bill to legalize marijuana, the body's president says he's hoping the proposal fails to make it out of his chamber.

Sen. Bradley's Opposition

In an interview with WMUR, Sen. Jeb Bradley (R) expressed strong reservations about the legalization of marijuana, stating unequivocally, "I don't want to see it get out of the Senate, period." He cited health and mental health concerns and warned against inviting the black market into the state.

The Proposal's Path

The bill, HB 1633, cleared the Senate Judiciary Committee with a narrow vote of 3–2 last week, marking the first time a Senate panel has endorsed a marijuana legalization proposal. However, before advancing, the committee approved amendments, including stricter penalties for public consumption and limitations on cannabis retail establishments per municipality.

Advocates' Concerns

While some see progress in the Senate's movement towards legalization, others, including the ACLU of New Hampshire, have voiced concerns over increased penalties and potential disproportionate impacts, particularly on marginalized communities.

Senate President's Amendments

Sen. Bradley proposed amendments to address various concerns, including limits on THC content in products, mandatory mental health training for industry workers, and tighter regulations on cannabis businesses. However, these proposals were not adopted by the committee.

Future Prospects

Despite the Senate's push, Gov. Chris Sununu (R) remains skeptical, indicating that he would only consider signing the bill with specific provisions. With only several months left in Sununu's term, questions linger about the fate of marijuana legalization under potential new leadership.

Historical Context

New Hampshire lawmakers have grappled with cannabis reform for years, with previous attempts at legalization stalling in the legislature. Despite bipartisan support for some measures, the path to legalization has been fraught with challenges and disagreements between chambers.

As New Hampshire senators debate the future of cannabis legalization in the state, the fate of HB 1633 hangs in the balance. With diverging opinions among lawmakers and continued scrutiny over regulatory frameworks, the path to legalization remains uncertain.