



Durbin Introduces Bill to Increase Federal Research Into Marijuana

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) today introduced legislation that would lift federal barriers and increase research into cannabis. The *Expanding Cannabis Research and Information Act* would remove restrictions on federal research into cannabis and expand studies on the potential benefits and harms from cannabis use. The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine in 2017 examined the current state of cannabis research and found conclusive evidence that marijuana is effective for a variety of health conditions, while raising questions about unknown benefits and harms associated with its use for others. There remains very limited research regarding the health and public safety impacts of cannabis use.

“With some form of legalization on the books in over 30 states and now Illinois, I want to lift federal restrictions so we can conduct additional medical research on marijuana,” Durbin said. **“We need a better understanding of promising uses of cannabis for treatment, as well as how marijuana use impacts public safety and specific populations – including children, pregnant women, and drivers.”**

Under federal law, cannabis and its derivatives are classified by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) as Schedule I controlled substances, defined as having no medical benefit. This classification imposes restrictions on the access to and use of cannabis in scientific research. Researchers have to follow a multi-step regulatory maze for each new study of cannabis, including clinical trial approval from the Food and Drug Administration; acquiring strains of cannabis through the National Institutes of Health (NIH); and numerous levels of personnel licensure and facility inspection from the DEA; in addition to multiple additional levels of state registrations. This has created regulatory conflicts in which researchers in some states that have legalized the recreational use of cannabis are unable to conduct research on products that are readily available to the public.

Specifically, the *Expanding Cannabis Research and Information Act* would:

- ***Direct the NIH, CDC, and SAMHSA to develop a national cannabis research agenda.*** The agenda would prioritize key questions and gaps in evidence—including a study of diseases with the greatest potential benefit; how marijuana affects vulnerable populations; long-term effects; different modes of delivery; and public safety concerns.
- ***Direct HHS to collect more data on cannabis use and impacts on health outcomes*** . Using public health surveys and analysis of public medical records, this would expand public health data collection on health outcomes and the variety of products used.
- ***Reclassify cannabis from a Schedule I to a Schedule III controlled substance.*** This will remove barriers that researchers face in accessing supply of cannabis and credentialing staff/facilities to demonstrate safety and capacity to study cannabis.
- ***Establish an NIH research “Centers of Excellence” designation.*** The designation would streamline research by enabling qualified universities to undergo a single DEA facility/staff inspection that lasts for the entire 5-10 year duration, rather than needing specific approvals for each study and researcher. Additionally, the designation would expand the number of approved suppliers for marijuana cultivation for research.

The *Expanding Cannabis Research and Information Act* is supported by the Illinois State Medical Society, Epilepsy Foundation, National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Parkinson’s Foundation, Michael J. Fox Foundation, American Public Health Association, Chicago Medical Society.