

Gov. Pritzker Signs Legislation Strengthening Illinois' Medical Cannabis Program

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SPRINGFIELD — Governor JB Pritzker signed legislation strengthening Illinois' medical cannabis program, which provides relief to more than 80,000 patients across the state.

“This legislation brings our medical cannabis program in line with my administration’s vision for equity, and it makes adjustments for the lessons we’ve learned since its inception,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “As we continue to reform state government so it

better serves its families, we must do so in a way that advances dignity, empathy, opportunity and grace.”

Senate Bill 455

Today, Gov. Pritzker signed Senate Bill 455, supporting students who are registered patients in the medical cannabis program by expanding the means of administering medical cannabis products and permitting its use at school-sponsored activities or before or after normal school activities.

The new law allows a nurse or school administrator to administer medical cannabis products and allows students to self-administer under the direct supervision of a school nurse or school administrator. A student’s parent or guardian must provide written authorization and provide a copy of the registry identification card of the student and parent or guardian. The Illinois State Board of Education and Department of Public Health will to develop a training curriculum for nurses and school administrators, which must be completed annually.

SB 455 takes effect on January 1, 2020.

Senate Bill 2023

The governor also signed Senate Bill 2023 on Friday, expanding and making permanent Illinois’ medical cannabis program. The law eliminates the sunset provision to the Compassionate Use of Medical Cannabis Program Act, adds 11 new conditions for eligibility purposes and expands the range of medical professionals who can certify eligibility of applicants to the program.

Expansion of eligible conditions: Medical conditions that now qualify for the medical cannabis program include autism, chronic pain, irritable bowel syndrome, migraines, osteoarthritis, anorexia nervosa, Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, Neuro-Behcet's Autoimmune Disease, neuropathy, polycystic kidney disease and superior canal dehiscence syndrome. The 11 new conditions join the existing 41 qualifying medical conditions under the Compassionate Use of Medical Cannabis Program Act.

Expansion of medical professionals who certify patients: Instead of solely physicians, advance practice registered nurses and physician assistants can now join physicians in diagnosing and certifying an individual’s eligibility for the medical cannabis program. Both advance practice registered nurses and physician assistants are currently authorized to prescribe opioids to patients where appropriate. Expanding the range of medical

professionals will help expand access to the program in rural areas of the state where geographic barriers may restrict access to the program.

Other changes: The law requires IDFPR to award remaining dispensary licenses using a competitive application review system similar to that proposed in the adult-use legislation, including awarding points for participants who qualify as social equity applicants. It also prevents patient referrals to other health care professionals solely for the purposes of certification, prohibits the use and sale of smokable cannabis to persons under age 21 to align the program with the recently passed Tobacco 21 legislation and repeals location restrictions for medical cannabis dispensaries beginning July 1, 2019. Every county, instead of just Cook County, will now have the ability to establish a 3% tax on the gross receipts of sales.

SB 2023 took effect on Friday, August 9, 2019.

“These new laws will stabilize the medical cannabis program and ensure access for patients for years to come,” said Rep. Bob Morgan (D-Deerfield). “As we legalize recreational use, I am glad our state is staying focused on providing relief to patients suffering from chronic, debilitating conditions. Patients can rest assured that they will remain a priority.”

“The medical cannabis program in Illinois has a proven track record of helping alleviate pain for many patients in our state,” said Sen. Laura Fine (D-Glenview). “By making the program permanent, expanding the number of qualifying conditions on the list, and allowing veterans to enroll in the Opioid Alternative Pilot Program, we will vastly improve the quality of life for many people.”

“There are many students across the state who rely on medicinal cannabis as part of their medical regimen,” said Sen. Cristina Castro (D-Elgin). “Ideally, the parents of these students would provide the medications, but it’s often the case that the parents are unable to make it to the school due to other commitments. By giving school nurses the ability to administer these important medications, we can ensure that students across Illinois are getting the proper treatment they require.”