



February 28, 2017

The Honorable Brad Zaun
Iowa State Senate
State Capitol
1007 East Grand Ave
Des Moines, IA, 50319

Dear Senator Zaun:

On behalf of the Epilepsy Foundation and the Epilepsy Foundation of North/Central Illinois, Iowa and Nebraska, we would like to thank you for introducing Senate Study Bill 1176, which would ensure that Iowa residents living with epilepsy and uncontrolled seizures could gain safe, legal access to medical cannabis as a treatment option. This bill would establish a comprehensive, state-regulated cannabis program.

The Epilepsy Foundation is the leading national voluntary health organization that speaks on behalf of more than 3 million Americans with epilepsy and seizures. We foster the wellbeing of children and adults affected by seizures through research programs, educational activities, advocacy, and direct services. Epilepsy is a medical condition that produces seizures affecting a variety of mental and physical functions. Approximately 1 in 26 Americans will develop epilepsy at some point in their lifetime. There is no "one size fits all" treatment for epilepsy, and about a third of people living with epilepsy suffer from uncontrolled or intractable seizures, with many more living with significant side-effects, despite available treatments. Uncontrolled seizures can lead to disability, injury, and even death. This is why people living with uncontrolled seizures turn to medical cannabis when other options have failed.

The Epilepsy Foundation is committed to supporting physician-directed care, and to exploring and advocating for all potential treatment options for epilepsy, including cannabidiol (CBD) and medical cannabis. People with uncontrolled seizures live with the continual risk of serious injuries and loss of life. If a patient and their health care professionals feel that the potential benefits of medical cannabis for uncontrolled epilepsy outweigh the risks, then families need to have that legal option. Nothing should stand in the way of patients gaining access to this potentially lifesaving treatment.

In states where medical use of cannabis is legal as a treatment for epilepsy, a number of people living with epilepsy report beneficial effects, including a decrease in seizure activity, when using a cannabis strain rich in cannabidiol. Supporting SSB 1176 to create a safe and comprehensive medical cannabis program will allow Iowans access to this potential treatment option. Not everyone with epilepsy should or would consider medical cannabis as a treatment option, and further research is needed, but medical cannabis, when prescribed by a treating physician, may be the best alternative for some individuals living with drug resistant epilepsy and uncontrolled

seizures. Legal access to cannabis will support increased research efforts and allow individuals who have failed to gain seizure control on all existing therapies an option for treatment.

The Epilepsy Foundation and the Epilepsy Foundation of North/Central Illinois, Iowa, & Nebraska thank you for your continued support of this issue and engagement with the epilepsy community. We strongly support SSB 1176 and look forward to working with the legislature to ensure safe, reliable, and legal access to medical cannabis for Iowa residents living with epilepsy and uncontrolled seizures. Please reach out to Roxanne Cogil with the Epilepsy Foundation of North/Central Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska at rcogil@epilepsyiowa.org or (515) 238-7660 with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Ben Slack
Executive Director
Epilepsy Foundation of North/Central Illinois,
Iowa & Nebraska



Philip M. Gattone, M.Ed.
President & CEO
Epilepsy Foundation