



March 10, 2017

The Honorable Harvey S. Peeler, Jr., Chairman
Senate Medical Affairs Committee
213 Gressette Office Building
P.O. Box 142
Columbia, SC 29202

Dear Chairman Peeler and Members of the Senate Medical Affairs Committee:

The Epilepsy Foundation urges you to support Senate Bill 212, which would ensure South Carolinians living with epilepsy and uncontrolled seizures can gain safe, legal access to medical cannabis as a treatment option. This bill would create a comprehensive medical cannabis program accessible to individuals with debilitating medical conditions after consultation with a physician. The program would be regulated by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control and would include a licensing structure for establishments to cultivate, process, dispense, and test medical cannabis.

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.

Currently, the medical use of cannabis is legal per state law in 28 states and the District of Columbia. In these states, a number of people living with epilepsy report beneficial effects, including a decrease in seizure activity, when using a cannabis strain rich in cannabidiol. The

state can play a critical role in ensuring that access to medical cannabis is safe and reliable. Supporting S. 212 to create a safe and comprehensive medical cannabis program will allow South Carolinians 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 urges you to support S. 212, which would ensure South Carolinians living with epilepsy and uncontrolled seizures can gain safe, legal access to medical cannabis as a treatment option. Please do not hesitate to contact Angela Ostrom, Chief Operating Office & Vice President Public Policy, at 301-918-3766 or aostrom@efa.org with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philip M. Gattone". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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