Recommendation
Pass legislation like the Strengthening the Tenth Amendment Through Entrusting States (STATES) Act (H.R. 2093/S.1028) and the Expanding Cannabis Research and Information Act (S.2400) to ensure that people who legally use cannabis for the treatment of epilepsy or seizures in accordance with state law do not risk federal prosecution and to facilitate federal research into the potential therapeutic benefits and harms of cannabis by removing onerous restrictions.

BACKGROUND: There is no “one size fits all” treatment for epilepsy, and around 30 – 40 percent of individuals living with epilepsy suffer from uncontrolled or intractable seizures, despite available treatments. Some people living with epilepsy and seizures and their providers have reported beneficial effects and reduced seizure activity when using medical cannabis or cannabidiol (CBD) and therefore turn to it when other treatments have failed. As with any other treatment regimen, it is critical that physicians have the ability to consult and closely monitor individuals using cannabis and/or CBD, and physicians must have the ability to legally do so.

Currently, the use of cannabis is legal in 33 states and the District of Columbia. However, without safeguards in place, individuals who legally use medical cannabis and/or CBD under state law are at a continual risk of federal prosecution. Federal protections for lawful state-level medical cannabis activities would help ensure safe and reliable access to medical cannabis through state-regulated programs.

Despite some evidence that cannabis and CBD help reduce seizure activity in some individuals, it is currently difficult and expensive to conduct further, more robust research into this connection. There are significant obstacles for scientists and researchers to organize clinical trials involving cannabis due to its Schedule I designation, and only the National Institute for Drug Abuse (NIDA) can cultivate cannabis for medical research. There are also additional costs and infrastructure requirements due to the Schedule I designation that further limit innovation and investment into medical benefit research.

ABOUT EPILEPSY
Epilepsy is a disease or disorder of the brain which causes reoccurring seizures. Epilepsy is made up of many different types of seizures or syndromes, affects people throughout the lifespan, and can have many different causes and associated conditions.

3.4 million Americans live with active epilepsy. While some are able to gain seizure control, 30-40% of people with epilepsy live with uncontrolled seizures despite available treatments. Delayed recognition of seizures and inadequate treatment increase a person’s risk of subsequent seizures, brain damage, disability, and death. Epilepsy imposes an annual economic burden of $19.4 billion on the country.