



April 30, 2018

Dear Members of the Iowa Senate:

On behalf of the Epilepsy Foundation and our local affiliate, Epilepsy Foundation of Iowa, we urge you to support Senate File 2405, which would make much needed improvements to the medical cannabis program. These improvements would make the state medical cannabis program more comprehensive by modifying the THC cap, adding more eligible medical conditions, and removing the sales tax on medical cannabis.

The Epilepsy Foundation is the leading national voluntary health organization that speaks on behalf of the at least 3.4 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 or CBD is legal per state law in the majority of states. 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. Senate File 2405 would modify the 3 percent cap on the THC limit to ensure that individuals in Iowa can be realistically treated with an affordable product. Further, this law would add to the list of eligible medical conditions for which medical cannabis can be recommended, and would clarify that medical cannabis products are sales tax free. This is critical for individuals who rely on medical cannabis to treat their conditions, and an important accessibility measure for products that will otherwise be out-of-pocket expenses for these individuals.

Not everyone with epilepsy should or would consider medical cannabis as a treatment option, and further research is needed, but medical cannabis, when recommended by a treating physician, may be the best alternative for some individuals living with drug resistant epilepsy



and uncontrolled seizures. Legal access to cannabis would 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 our local affiliate, Epilepsy Foundation of Iowa, urge you to support Senate File 2405, which would ensure Iowa residents living with epilepsy and uncontrolled seizures can gain safe, legal access to medical cannabis as a treatment option. Please do not hesitate to contact Abbey Roudebush, Government Relations Manager, at 301-918-3784 or aroudebush@efa.org with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roxanne Cogil".

Roxanne Cogil
Executive Director
Epilepsy Foundation of Iowa

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philip M. Gattone".

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