

State Senator William P. Coley II

Senate Bill 264 Sponsor Testimony

Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee

April, 17th 2018

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Beagle, Ranking Member Tavares, and members of the Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about Senate Bill 264.

The implementation of the Ohio Medical Marijuana Control Program has created a serious buzz, and for all the wrong reasons. Revelations about inadequacies in the scoring and processing of cultivator applications have kicked up a cloud of suspicion regarding the program, and even prompted Auditor of State Dave Yost to announce the discovery of a ‘critical flaw’ in the scoring process.

This legislation would require a process audit be performed on the application processing and scoring conducted by the Department of Commerce **before** any final licenses are granted. If the State Auditor finds that the program is free from any critical flaws or significant control weaknesses, then final licenses for cultivators, processors, and testers can be awarded.

This legislation institutes a measure which will help alleviate the serious concerns Ohioans have about the integrity of the medical marijuana program as a whole. These audits will also identify any weaknesses, allowing for quick remedies to keep the implementation of the program on schedule.

One minor issue regarding the type of audit proposed was brought to our attention by the Auditor’s Office, and we have an amendment to correct that issue ready for future consideration by the committee.

Finally, critics of this bill have contended that it is just a tactic to delay the September 8th kickoff of the program. This could not be further from the truth, as SB 264 contains an emergency clause which would bring it in to effect immediately, and I have zero intention of delaying implementation. A second false claim is that this is an effort to prevent provisional license holders from being granted final licenses. To be quite frank, I couldn’t care less which entities are granted final licenses, so long as the process through which they are selected is beyond reproach. Ideally, an audit would be conducted and no reasons would be uncovered to justify the changing of any application scores.

Whether you, as a legislator, are for or against the implementation of a medical marijuana program in Ohio, I am confident that none of us wants a program implemented if it was the result of a critically flawed process. This bill will prevent such a problem.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I would like to thank you for your time and consideration and would be happy to answer any questions.