

HB 523 – Sponsor Testimony
April 19, 2016

To Chairman Schuring, Ranking Member Ramos, and the Select Committee on Medical Marijuana: thank you for allowing me to give sponsor testimony on House Bill 523. Ultimately, House Bill 523 aims at creating a system of regulated medical marijuana in Ohio. Initially, it would create a board on which a diverse group of people would serve, both from the government and from the private sector. All nine members of this board would be appointed by the governor. All appointments must be made within 30 days after the effective date of this bill. The board would oversee cultivators, dispensaries, independent labs that test the plants, processors, and physicians that would like to be authorized to recommend a patient to receive medical marijuana.

These physicians will be overseen by the Medical Marijuana Control Commission as well. The physician must be licensed by the state medical board, must have a legitimate relationship with the patient, must track the patients to whom he/she recommends marijuana, describe why they chose to recommend marijuana, and must note in what form they recommended marijuana. The physician must report to the commission every 90 days on how many patients were recommended marijuana by them. Physicians are also required to report to the commission on the efficacy that they see in marijuana therapy. Medical marijuana cannot be recommended for a period longer than 90 days. A minor cannot be recommended medical marijuana without consent from a parent or guardian.

The commission will oversee cultivators of the cannabis plant and independent labs who test for potency, homogeneity, and contamination of the plant.

Processors are also overseen by the commission. Processors will be responsible for taking the marijuana from the cultivator and making it into a form suitable for the dispensary. The commission will allow edibles, patches, plant material, and oils. The commission will decide whether or not smoking will be allowed. All products must be in tamper-resistant packaging and must have clear labels. The labels must also list the THC and CBD content of the marijuana. No medical marijuana must be in a form that is considered to be attractive to children.

No home cultivation will be allowed. Local control of dispensaries and cultivation sites will be allowed. The commission shall perform background checks on applicants who would like to join any level of the medical marijuana process.

The medical marijuana control commission shall oversee the dispensaries, the training of employees at dispensaries, and the tracking of the dispensed product in OARRS, like we already do with pharmaceuticals. The commission can track the products in real time and will have a “seed to sale” tracking system. The commission will have rules for what types of medical conditions a person can be recommended marijuana.

An employer won't be required to accommodate an employee's use of medical marijuana.

These are some highlights of House Bill 523. Thank you for hearing my testimony. I am now open for questions.