

REP. GAIL FINNEY

Kansas 84th District

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**STATE OF KANSAS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**



STATE CAPITOL BUILDING – DSOB
TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612
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**CANNABIS COMPASSIONATE CARE ACT
HB 2330**

TUESDAY JANUARY 24, 2012

PROPONENT



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ASSIGNMENTS**

VISION 20/20
RANKING DEMOCRAT

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STATE LEGISLATORS**

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MEMBER

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Greetings Health and Human Services Committee members and guests attending today’s “2nd Informational Hearing” on medical cannabis policy in Kansas.

As the sponsor and a supporter of House Bill 2330, I am in full support of The Cannabis Compassionate Care Act which was designed to protect patients with debilitating medical conditions, as well as practitioners and providers, from arrest and prosecution, criminal and other penalties and property forfeiture if such patients engage in the medical use of cannabis.

This legislation would provide for the registration and functions of not-for-profit compassion centers, which will have the authority to possess, cultivate, manufacture, and dispense cannabis to registered cardholders under the control of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. This bill will allow patients with valid doctors’ prescriptions to obtain special state licenses from the Department of Health and Environment, which would permit them to possess a limited amount of marijuana. State licenses also would be issued to “caregivers,” who would be allowed to pick up marijuana at dispensaries and take it to patients who can’t easily travel.

Currently, there are approximately 13,000 Kansans diagnosed with cancer each year, approximately 5,300 cancer patients die each year, and approximately 4,003 Kansans are currently living with HIV/AIDS. In some instances, the suffering associated with symptoms cannot be adequately controlled by the use of available prescription medications or the side effects of the prescription medications are intolerable. Many patients have found that these symptoms are well controlled and play a therapeutic role in the treatment of their serious medical conditions by the use of medical cannabis when relief is not provided by prescription medications.

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Opponents of this Act strongly suggest Marinol, a pharmaceutical alternative to natural cannabis, as the best alternative for chronic sufferers. Despite FDA approval, this gelatin capsule provides only limited relief to select patients, particularly when compared to natural cannabis and its cannabinoids. Marinol should remain a legal option for patients and physicians; however, federal and state laws should be amended to allow for those patients who are unresponsive to synthetic THC the ability to use natural cannabis and its cannabinoids as a medical therapy without fear of arrest and/or criminal prosecution. Unfortunately, when you are really ill it is very difficult to hold down food, maintain an appetite or swallow medications.

Currently, there is wide support for legalization of medicinal cannabis in Kansas. According to a poll conducted in 2010 by Survey USA, fifty-eight percent of adults in Kansas support the legalization of medical marijuana.

Two important Kansas proponents of medical marijuana include a cancer doctor and a notable cancer patient: Dr. Shaker R. Dakhil, M.D., F.A.C.P. of the Cancer Center of Kansas, P.A.; and former Kansas Attorney General Robert Stephan. For your review and convenience, I have attached supportive previous testimony from both of them.

In closing, this bill seeks to enact statewide legal protections, shielding from prosecution those seriously ill patients who use marijuana therapeutically with a doctor’s recommendation. At the same time, it will not alter or interfere with existing state laws discouraging the non-medical, recreational use of marijuana. The majority of Kansans supports this bill and they deserve an actual hearing and meaningful debate on this important public health issue.

Sincerely,

Representative Gail Finney

Kansas House of Representatives 84th District