

May 19, 2021

The Honorable Dan Patrick, Lieutenant Governor
Honorable Members of the Texas Senate
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Lt. Gov. Patrick and Members of the Senate,

As organizations that advocate on behalf of countless Texans with disabilities or severe medical conditions and their families, we urge you to support critical improvements to the Texas Compassionate Use Program (TCUP) this legislative session by sending HB 1535 to committee and voting it off the Senate floor as soon as possible.

Established by the Legislature in 2015 and modified in 2019, the TCUP allows state residents with specific qualifying conditions to access limited types of medical cannabis products from a small number of licensed businesses. While it is undoubtedly helping some patients, the program is still not meeting the needs of most Texas residents who could benefit from medical cannabis, including many who currently qualify to participate.

There are more than one million Texas residents with debilitating medical conditions who do not qualify for the TCUP but would qualify for medical cannabis programs in many other states, according to a [December 2020 analysis](#) by Vicente Sederberg LLP. This includes individuals with non-terminal cancer, auto-immune diseases, PTSD, and severe chronic pain. Among patients who do qualify for the program, many have reported they cannot access the products they need because the state has licensed only three medical cannabis dispensing organizations, which can only dispense products with extremely low levels of THC, a critical component of cannabis with proven medical value.

Texans with disabilities and other serious medical conditions deserve access to the same treatment options as residents of the 30-plus states that have adopted comprehensive medical cannabis laws. We hope you will agree and take action to improve the quality of life for our state's most medically vulnerable citizens and their families.

There are several steps the Legislature can take this session to safely and significantly improve the TCUP. Most urgently, we recommend it:

1. Expand the list of qualifying conditions so that more Texas patients can participate in the program if their doctors believe medical cannabis would be a safe and effective treatment option;

2. Lift or increase the current THC cap to allow for a broader spectrum of medical cannabis products, reduce the amount of product (and filler ingredients) that must be consumed to experience medical benefits, and ensure the program helps the patients it is intended to help;
3. Allow the licensing of additional dispensaries and cultivators around the state to ensure all Texans who qualify for the TCUP have safe, legal, and reliable access to regulated, high-quality medical cannabis products;
4. Authorize certified labs to perform independent, third-party testing of medical cannabis to protect consumers and hold dispensing organizations accountable; and
5. Establish patient protections that eliminate the threats of arrest, prosecution, and other penalties, such as loss of parental rights, for patients who use medical cannabis legally under state law.

We believe these recommendations represent a measured and responsible approach to expanding the scope of Texas' current medical cannabis law and developing a more efficacious medical cannabis program.

On behalf of the countless Texas patients, families, and advocates we represent, we urge you to take action to improve the TCUP this legislative session. Please send HB 1535 to committee and vote it off the Senate floor as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Coalition of Texans with Disabilities

ADAPT of Texas

The Arc of Texas

Autism Society of Texas

Epilepsy Foundation of Central and South Texas

Mothers Advocating Medical Marijuana for Autism

Texans for Safe Access

Texas Parent to Parent

Texas Rare Alliance

Tourette Association - Texas Chapter