



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Diane J. Savino

Patient Advocates & Health Care Professionals Rally for Medical Marijuana Bill

DIANE J. SAVINO April 25, 2013

LEGISLATION HAS BROAD PUBLIC SUPPORT

Patient advocates – including patients who use marijuana for medical purposes – and health care professionals rallied on the steps of City Hall today to support legislation allowing medical use of marijuana in New York. Patients suffering from severe debilitating or life-threatening conditions could be treated with medical marijuana under legislation introduced by Assembly Health Committee Chair Richard N. Gottfried and Senator Diane J. Savino. New York's bill A. 6357/S.4406 is co-sponsored by 68 other legislators. The bill was recently reported from the Assembly Health Committee by 21-4, including 3 of the Committee's 7 Republicans voting in favor.

The bill has been endorsed by dozens of organizations including the New York State Nurses Association, the Pharmacists Society of the State of New York, the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, and the New York State AIDS Advisory Council. A 2012 Siena poll found that a strong majority of New Yorkers support legalization of medical marijuana, 61%-33%, including 69%-27% among independent voters.

“If the patient and physician agree that the patient’s severe debilitating or life-threatening condition should be treated with medical marijuana, the government should not stand in the way,” said Gottfried. “Thousands of New Yorkers have serious medical conditions that would benefit from medical use of marijuana. It is cruel to deny treatment to patients who are suffering or to turn them into criminals.”

“Anybody who ever had a family member suffer from a debilitating disease learns very quickly the limitations of modern medicine at treating pain,” Senator Savino said. “Doctors and patients have documented that marijuana can offer very effective pain treatment where other medications have failed for many patients who suffer from other life-threatening or debilitating conditions.”

“This is an issue whose time has come,” said Councilmember Daniel Dromm, author of a New York City Council resolution in support of medical marijuana. “People suffering with severe medical conditions should not be treated as criminals. It is time for New York State to stop denying this palliative measure to patients who so desperately need it.”

The bill would allow medical use of marijuana under a doctor’s supervision, for patients with cancer and other severe debilitating or life-threatening conditions. A practitioner who is licensed to prescribe controlled substances would certify that a patient has a severe debilitating or life-threatening condition that should be treated with the medical use of marijuana. Certifying and dispensing medical marijuana would be included in the I-STOP prescription monitoring system for controlled substances enacted in 2012.

The Health Department would license and regulate “registered organizations” to produce and dispense medical marijuana for certified patients. These organizations could be hospitals, for-profit businesses, or not-for-profit corporations. They would be required to comply with detailed “seed to sale” security controls, and a clinical advisory committee made up predominately of health care professionals would advise the Health Commissioner on

clinical matters.