

BROWARD LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION

NEWSLETTER

2019 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The Broward Legislative Delegation Office provides a communication resource between the Federal, State, local governments and Broward County citizens to facilitate the legislative process. Our responsibilities include maintaining an efficient means for the local bill process and monitoring bills approved by the Delegation Members through the Legislature. The Legislative Delegation has a responsibility to monitor the appropriations process, securing State Revenues and other allocated funds for programs, organizations and government agencies in Broward County.

Week 2: Mar. 11 - 15

Smokable medical marijuana gets final approval and heads to Governor.

Without much debate and two days before Gov. Ron DeSantis' deadline, a bill to repeal a ban on smoking medical marijuana has finally rolled onto the governor's desk.

The Florida House affirmed the right to smoke medical pot Wednesday afternoon, approving the Senate bill to include "smoking" to the language in the medical marijuana constitutional amendment. The bill allows patients to receive up to 2.5 ounces of whole flower cannabis every 35 days as recommended by their qualified doctor.

The bill passed 101-11. Seven representatives were not present for the vote. (Last week the Senate passed the bill in a 34-4 vote).

Gov. DeSantis in January tasked the Legislature with amending Florida law to allow smoking medical marijuana. If legislators didn't by the March 15 deadline he set, the governor said he would do so with litigation.

In 2016, about 71 percent of voting Floridians approved a constitutional amendment to legalize medical marijuana. While the 2017 bill signed into law by Gov. Rick Scott legalized access to the drug in pill, oil, edible and vape form, it made smoking it illegal.

In addition to repealing the ban on smoking, the bill passed Wednesday also establishes a Medical Marijuana Research and Education Board. The board will oversee a research consortium established by the state university system's Board of Governors, which will receive \$1.5 million for the program.

Cont'd on next page

School Voucher legislation progresses

The House Education Committee on Thursday approved a bill (PCB EDC 19-01) that would create a new voucher program, known as the Family Empowerment Scholarship program, which would be open to many middle-class families.

If approved, the program would be available to families whose incomes are up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level during the 2019-2020 school year --- a calculation that equates to \$77,250 for a family of four. The threshold would gradually increase, with a family of four making \$96,572 eligible for the vouchers in the 2022-2023 school year.

By comparison, the Senate proposal (SB 7070) would create a program that would provide vouchers to families up to 260 percent of the federal poverty level --- the equivalent of \$66,950 for a family of four.

Senate Education Chairman Manny Diaz Jr., R-Hialeah, and Senate Education Appropriations Chairwoman Kelli Stargel, R-Lakeland, said they think that's a better approach.

If the House proposal is signed into law, the Family Empowerment Scholarship program would create about 28,000 scholarships for the 2019-20 school year. Sullivan said the bill also would eliminate the waiting list in the Tax Credit Scholarship program, which serves about 100,000 students. <https://www.news4jax.com/education/voucher-expansion-on-the-move-in-florida-house>

Medical Marijuana

The bill also requires a second opinion from a board-certified pediatrician for non-terminal patients under age 18.

“While there’s not a lot of science out there currently on the effects of medical marijuana there’s a body of science on the effects of medical marijuana to the developing brain,” Rodrigues said. “But with children who have a terminal illness, long-term concerns are secondary to the short-term concerns.”

It deletes a provision that prohibits a medical marijuana treatment center from selling products like pipes, bongos or rolling papers. Another amendment passed to allow patients to buy those products at third-party locations if they are using marijuana for medical use. The bill only addresses the repeal of the smoking ban and does not address the current integration structure surrounding medical marijuana treatment centers nor does it address provisions like drug-free workplace protections.

If the chamber didn’t pass a bill to repeal a ban on smoking marijuana, the ban would be dissolved via litigation.

Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried, a former marijuana lobbyist who campaigned on the promise of expanded access to the medicine, said the legislation was needed.

“Today’s action to finally allow smokable medical marijuana brings four words to the lips of people across our state: ‘It’s about damn time,’” Fried said. “I’m thankful for the House and Senate’s work to fix this situation.”

Times/Herald Tallahassee Bureau reporter Elizabeth Koh contributed to this report.

<https://www.tampabay.com/florida-politics/2019/03/13/smokable-medical-pot-gets-final-approval-in-florida-house-bill-heads-to-ron-desantis-for-signature/>

BROWARD DAYS 2019

This year’s Broward Days in Tallahassee was a truly successful event. We are thankful to all of our Sponsors, Supporters, and Friends who attended.

Our success was possible because of you. THANK YOU!

Candice Ericks, Chair * Amy Bisceglia, Vice Chair

Please enjoy these photos from our two-day celebration of Broward in Tallahassee.



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Disclaimer: The Broward Legislative Delegation office is a non-partisan office and does not, in any way, endorse or favor any particular political party or Delegation Member. The contents of this publication are strictly informational. Bill content is obtained from www.myfloridahouse.gov and/or www.flsenate.gov.



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More photos from BROWARD DAYS 2019 will be available at www.browarddays.com.

In 2017, the Broward Legislative Delegation, under the leadership of Representative Bobby DuBose, became the official administrative office for Broward Days.



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