

HB 628: Support  
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I am a pediatric physical therapist and I work with infants and toddlers. I also have chronic pain throughout my body due to my medical condition known as Ehlers Danlos (EDS). I have had many doctors offer and push opiates on me for my chronic pain which is common for those with my diagnosis. According to a study in 2019, children and adults with EDS are twice as likely be prescribed opiates and take more than the matched controls. Additionally, a study in 2020 by Demes, et.al., found that 37% of people with EDS report using medical cannabis for pain control.

I am fortunate that neither my brain nor body do well on opiates. If it worked for me, I would certainly be an addict now. By the time Maryland legalized medical cannabis, I was desperate for pain relief. I was only sleeping 2 hours a night and the ibuprofen I was taking to try to control my pain gave me a stomach ulcer. Low levels of THC before bed each night, allow me to now sleep through the night. I do not use cannabis during the day as I can generally tolerate my daytime pain and the nighttime dose seems to have a carry-over effect of some pain relief.

However, if I were ever to be tested for THC, I would fail my drug test despite legally using a safer medication with fewer side effects than the opiates I've been prescribed. As THC metabolites stay in the urine for 30+ days, I will test positive despite never being impaired by cannabis during the day. I cannot apply for a job that requires me to drug test as there are no protections in place in Maryland. In fact, going on record here could jeopardize my job which many people have told me keeps them from testifying. There are many other professionals just like me who need medical cannabis to keep from becoming legally disabled but, yet are afraid to speak up as to the need for this legislation.

The states surrounding us all have employee rights legislation in place despite many of them having legalized after Maryland. Further, the NJ Supreme Court ruled that those fired for use of medical cannabis outside of work hours can sue for discrimination. It would be best if this is handled legislatively rather than through the court system.

Finally, the workman's compensation portion of this bill is critical especially in light of the opiate epidemic. Currently, someone who needs pain control following injury has to choose between covered opiates or the out of pocket cost of medical cannabis. Adding coverage for medical cannabis is one piece of fighting the opiate epidemic. Further, precedent has been set, again in New Jersey by the case *Vincent Hager v. M&K Construction (A-64-19) (084045)*.

Our medical cannabis laws are incomplete. We allow people to register and use medical cannabis but, we limit that use and force people to use more caustic options. This bill brings Maryland up to par with surrounding states. It is "high" time for Maryland to protect those of us who are legally and safely using medical cannabis.

Thank you for supporting HB 628.

Studies:

Schubart JR, Schilling A, Schaefer E, Bascom R, Francomano C. Use of prescription opioid and other drugs among a cohort of persons with Ehlers-Danlos syndrome: A retrospective study. *Am J Med Genet A*. 2019 Mar;179(3):397-403. doi: 10.1002/ajmg.a.61031. Epub 2019 Jan 9. PMID: 30624009.

Demes JS, McNair B, Taylor MRG. Use of complementary therapies for chronic pain management in patients with reported Ehlers-Danlos syndrome or hypermobility spectrum disorders. *Am J Med Genet A*. 2020 Nov;182(11):2611-2623. doi: 10.1002/ajmg.a.61837. Epub 2020 Sep 10. PMID: 32909698.

State legislation:

<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/LI/uconsCheck.cfm?txtType=HTM&yr=2016&sessInd=0&smthLwInd=0&act=16&chpt=21&sctn=3&subsctn=0>

<https://delcode.delaware.gov/title16/c049a/index.html>

<https://www.natlawreview.com/article/virginia-enacts-employment-protections-medical-use-cannabis-oil>

<https://code.dccouncil.us/dc/council/laws/23-276.html>

Legal cases:

<https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/new-jersey-medical-marijuana-costs-4906793/#:~:text=Recently%20however%2C%20the%20New%20Jersey,Jersey's%20state%20workers'%20compensation%20laws.>

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