

# National Medical Cannabis Patient Advocacy Group Dissatisfied with Inadequate Medical Cannabis Law in Mississippi

*Mississippi Fails to Protect Patients and Provide for Equal Access*

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On February 2, 2022, Governor Tate Reeves signed into law SB 2095, making Mississippi the 37th state to adopt medical cannabis laws. The

adoption of these laws is the conclusion of a year-long struggle for the future of cannabis in Mississippi.



Americans For  
Safe Access

Advancing Legal Medical Marijuana Therapeutics and Research  
Americans for Safe Access

In November 2020, Mississippi voters overwhelmingly supported a ballot initiative (74.1% of votes in favor), which authorized the state's department of health to create a medical cannabis program. The state's legislators rejected the measure, and instead sought to pass a weakened version of the law. On January 26, 2022, the state legislature passed SB 2095, their watered down vision for medical cannabis in Mississippi.

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*Abbey Roudebush, director of government relations at ASA*

There are loopholes written into the language that will allow individual municipalities to reject the law and keep medical cannabis illegal in their jurisdictions, and the bill limits cannabis businesses to operate in industrial or agricultural zones, which limits patient access. “We strongly oppose both of these provisions,” said Abbey Roudebush,

director of government affairs at Americans for Safe Access (ASA). “Patients across the state should have equitable access to this treatment option and should not be burdened by localities that wrongly choose to opt out of the law.”

The law is rife with issues that will severely limit patient access. The law limits THC content for flower products and concentrates; something ASA advocates against. Also, one of the most

glaring patient access issues is that patients will be limited to 1/8th of cannabis a day at dispensaries. With only an 1/8th a day, patients would have to make 24 separate trips in order to reach their monthly allotment of 3 ounces. Patients who meet their monthly allotment have no other option than to make these trips since this law does not include a provision for personal cultivation, unlike in the original initiative. "It is alarming that legislators would choose to put this kind of access burden on patients, many of whom have chronic or debilitating conditions that may make it difficult to make so many trips to dispensaries, especially if their county or town opts out of the law entirely," said Roudebush.

Most disturbingly, the law is almost naked of any legal protections for patients. This law allows employers to discriminate against medical cannabis patients and protects businesses from legal action if they choose to do so. Though the bill keeps landlords from being penalized for renting to patients, nothing in its language prevents landlords from denying patients housing based on their status. These glaring omissions must be corrected immediately in order to protect cannabis patients in the state.

There are several parts of the law that are good for patients, or at least a reason to be positive. SB 2095 lowered the proposed \$50 application fees for patients, down to \$25. The law also includes the ability for dosing on school grounds, which would include dosing by school staff; this is rare even among the states that allow dosing on school grounds and can lift a huge burden off of parents during the day, not to mention help to keep a child's education on track. In addition, the law outlines a tiered licensing system for cultivators and processors encompassing different scales of operations, where fees correspond to size of operation. There is also no set cap on the number of licenses the state will give out according to this law, so this at least leaves room for a state where retailers and producers are ubiquitous. It also outlines a timeline of 6 months from the effective date to begin licensing cannabis businesses, meaning regulators shouldn't be expected to drag their feet and patients could expect an operational system by summer 2022.

Unfortunately, zoning restrictions and municipal control both present potential barriers to widespread access and highlight that the law as it stands is completely inadequate for patients.

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"Legislators and regulators should begin work at once to correct these errors and ensure patients have safe, legal, and affordable access to cannabis as a medicine," said Roudebush.

#### [ABOUT AMERICANS FOR SAFE ACCESS](#)

Founded in 2002, Americans for Safe Access (ASA) is the largest national member-based organization of patients, medical professionals, scientists, and concerned citizens promoting safe and legal access to cannabis for therapeutic use and research. ASA works to overcome political,

social and legal barriers by creating policies that improve access to medical cannabis for patients through legislation, education, litigation, research, grassroots empowerment, advocacy and services for patients, governments, medical professionals, and medical cannabis providers.

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