



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 13, 2017

Contact: Britt Cudaback, britt.cudaback@legis.wi.gov, 608-266-0960

Bill Legalizing Marijuana in Wisconsin Will Jumpstart Economy, Create New Jobs

Representative Melissa Sargent introduces LRB-2457 to legalize recreational and medicinal marijuana in Wisconsin

(MADISON) – Today State Representative Melissa Sargent (D-Madison) hosted a press conference at the Wisconsin State Capitol to announce [LRB-2457](#), legislation to legalize marijuana in Wisconsin.

“This bill is so much more than legalizing marijuana—it’s about legalizing opportunity and prosperity,” said Sargent. “The state budget was due two weeks ago, and Wisconsin simply can’t afford to wait any longer—we deserve a real plan to create new jobs and stimulate our lagging economy, and that’s what this bill is.”

LRB-2457’s introduction comes nearly two weeks after Republicans failed to meet the July 1 state budget deadline and following several stalled budget negotiations between Assembly and Senate Republicans and Governor Walker. The proposal also marks the third time a bill to legalize marijuana has been introduced in the Wisconsin State Legislature since Sargent introduced the first bill of its kind in Wisconsin during the 2013-2014 legislative session.

“Business as usual is simply not cutting it. We need to start thinking about new, innovative ways to jumpstart our economy. Wisconsin has a billion-dollar budget deficit, Republicans have no real ideas for fixing our transportation fund, and Scott Walker still hasn’t created the 250,000 jobs he promised six years ago,” Sargent explained.

“Meanwhile, [in Colorado](#), legalizing marijuana generated \$2.4 billion in economic activity and created more than 18,000 new jobs in a single year alone. The most dangerous thing about marijuana is that it’s illegal, and as our budget crisis worsens and we continue to see new evidence to support legalization’s economic benefits, the more unjustifiable—and even foolish—it becomes not to legalize.”

The bill Sargent introduced today includes several changes from legalization bills introduced during previous sessions including providing employment and benefit protections for marijuana users, requiring insurance coverage for medicinal marijuana for terminal illnesses, and incorporating marijuana into current alcohol and tobacco educational curricula in schools. The bill also treats marijuana as an agricultural product, requiring the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection to conduct periodic inspections and to promote best practices for producing, harvesting, and packaging. Previous efforts to legalize marijuana have also never received a public hearing nor had a single Republican cosponsor.

“I’ve spoken with my Republican colleagues across the aisle, and some of them have expressed their quiet support for my bill,” said Sargent, who also [sent a letter](#) to Governor Scott Walker, Speaker Robin Vos, and Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald suggesting they consider legalizing marijuana as they deliberate the state budget. “Given the severe budget crisis Wisconsin is facing, I am hopeful they can get past the ‘D’ next to my name long enough to give legalizing marijuana the earnest review and consideration Wisconsin deserves.”

###

Melissa Sargent is a Representative in the Wisconsin State Assembly, representing the 48th Assembly District, which covers the east and north sides of the city of Madison and the village of Maple Bluff.