

As chief petitioner of the Measure 91 cannabis legalization law, I am proud that Oregon has chosen to be a pioneering leader on cannabis policy and greater drug policy reforms. As a recent report published in NPR and elsewhere has shown, legalization has been a benefit to states, creating jobs and generating revenue without the disastrous consequences predicted by opponents. However, one area that needs improved is how our great state treats patients, especially those that are the sickest and poorest among us.

If you have the means to make purchases at an Oregon dispensary, our cannabis program may be the best in the nation, but too many patients are left without adequate access to the medicine they need. Patients may be without the medicine that they need to treat or alleviate their debilitating medical condition because of poverty, mobility issues, the strain that works best for them is unavailable, or for a myriad of other reasons. Senate Bill 758 will help patients that need help the most by actually treating cannabis as a legitimate medicine as Oregonians have voted.

Eliminating unnecessary regulatory restrictions on small, personal gardens is a great step forward as it will help those battling poverty and those that need a specific strain for their medical conditions. Issuing permanent cards for lifetime chronic conditions that cannot be cured is just common sense and will improve the quality of lives for those with serious conditions, especially those with mobility issues. Of course, naturopaths and any medical professionals that can prescribe medicine should be allowed to recommend cannabis, a relatively safe medicine that has supermajority support among voters. Expanding the PTSD definition to include chronic anxiety and chronic depression will help veterans and many others that are suffering during an unprecedented mental health crisis. All Social Security Disability Insurance program patients being eligible for a reduced state registration fee will also help patients living through economic insecurity, who often have to make painful choices to forgo medicine or even food during these tough economic times.

With the passage of Senate Bill 758, the billion-dollar cannabis industry will still create much-needed jobs and generate millions upon millions in tax revenue. The industry will be fine and will continue to be one of the bright spots during our COVID-ravaged economy. However, sick and disabled Oregonians will benefit and have their lives greatly improved. This bill is a win-win for Oregon. Great bill, should pass.

Thank you.