

BOBBY A. ZIRKIN
Legislative District 11
Baltimore County

—
Chair
Judicial Proceedings Committee

—
Legislative Policy Committee



Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Suite 2 East
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3131 · 301-858-3131
800-492-7122 Ext. 3131
Fax 410-841-3737 · 301-858-3737
Bobby.Zirkin@senate.state.md.us

The Senate of Maryland ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Legislature Must Act Decisively Against Schuh Proposal

Anne Arundel County Executive Steve Schuh's position on medical cannabis is both disappointing and baffling. And it cannot be permitted to stand. Under Mr. Schuh's proposal, medical cannabis facilities, essentially the pharmacies to distribute medication to suffering patients, and all matters of manufacturing and distribution of this medication, would be made illegal in Anne Arundel County. As a member of the House of Delegates, Mr. Schuh voted against medical marijuana and to continue making possession of small amounts of marijuana an offense punishable by months in jail. In combination with his current stance, if Mr. Schuh has his way, citizens of Anne Arundel County, and across our State, with debilitating diseases such as cancer, AIDS, and glaucoma would continue to be forced to choose between obtaining helpful medication and being a criminal. Mr. Schuh would continue to force our sick and dying patients to contact their local drug dealer rather than their personal physician if they sought appropriate medical treatment. His stance is ludicrous on its face and should not be permitted to stand.

Over my 18 years in the General Assembly, and now as Chairman of the Judicial Proceedings Committee, I have witnessed the evolution of this issue here in Maryland and across the nation. I have had the opportunity to listen to hundreds of Marylanders share their stories about their own battles with cancer and other ailments and the efficacy of marijuana as a treatment option. I have heard from the loved ones of those sick patients telling stories about how the law forced them to go find drug dealers putting themselves and their loved ones in harm's way in order to receive helpful medication. I have listened to doctors and caregivers sharing the research about the tremendous value and promise of cannabis as a medicine. The old and tired arguments of the 1980s have given way, through decades of actual research, to a growing consensus about the medical value of cannabis to assist in a wide variety of ailments and disease. Over these years, the Legislature has worked extremely hard in a bipartisan way to bring relief to the tens of thousands of Marylanders who simply seek helpful treatments and pain management for their disease. Leaders of both parties have worked together on this issue along with the medical community and citizens from all across Maryland to insure access. This is the way Government is supposed to work.

Mr. Schuh cannot be permitted to succeed in his quest to continue the criminalization of Maryland's sick patients. Citizens across our State, in every jurisdiction, deserve access to helpful medication regardless of Mr. Schuh's adherence to a philosophy long since discredited. Mr. Schuh warns of marijuana as a gateway

drug and of teen use and of concerns about increased crime. Those arguments make no sense in relation to the issue of medical marijuana. States across our nation have moved to legalize medical marijuana and in no state have any of the issues raised by Mr. Schuh come to fruition. None. His arguments are nothing more than bumper sticker slogans rehashed over and over again from the public relations campaigns of the "War on Drugs" and have no relationship to fact. And certainly no relationship to the issue of medical cannabis.

If the Federal Government would get their act together and move Marijuana from a Schedule I, this entire debate would be moot. Patients would be able to get this medication like they get every other medication - from a pharmacy. Unfortunately, the inability of our federal counterparts to move has forced States to act in this matter. And action was necessary to stop the needless suffering and criminalization of citizens whose sole offense was being forced to deal with painful disease. I hope that someday soon, our friends in Washington will act to stop this nonsense and treat this medication like all others. Until such time, Maryland should.

We are One Maryland. Not one where one sick patient is treated differently than another simply based on what County they live in. Local law must not be permitted to create such inequities for suffering citizens. The General Assembly apparently must act once again to insure that every Marylander is treated equally, especially in their greatest time of need.

Senator Bobby A. Zirkin
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee