



West Virginia  
State Medical  
Association

# Policy Position

West Virginia Legislature, 2017 Session

---

**ISSUE:** Medical Marijuana

**Bills:** SB386/HB2071

## **WVSMA Position:**

The West Virginia State Medical Association opposes legislation proposing the legalization of medical marijuana and related products that have not been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

In the pending legislation, “medical marijuana” refers to the use of unprocessed cannabis plants. The FDA has NOT approved the use of unprocessed cannabis.

This term does not include cannabinoid derivatives that *are* approved by the FDA such as **dronabinol** and **nabilone**, which are used to prevent nausea and vomiting in chemotherapy patients.

Despite media accounts of patients deriving medical benefits from raw marijuana, **there is still insufficient evidence that its use is safe and effective.** Scientific literature suggests that further research is still needed to study the short-term and long-term adverse effects of the medical use of cannabinoids.

**Legalization without study and specific controls** could potentially be a public health concern.

WVSMA and the American Medical Association are opposed to calling unprocessed marijuana plants “medicine” because if they are still an illegal substance under federal law. Calling illegal drugs “medicine” is a dangerous message to send to the public, particularly children.

Regardless of legislative recognition, states that allow medical use of marijuana in raw form essentially allow physicians to “recommend” or “permit” such use but not prescribe or dispense it.

In summary, smoking anything is bad for your health. Ideally, FDA approval should be obtained before we place the burden of access on physicians.

For additional information, please contact Sarah Smith at (304) 541-0363.