

JAN 20 2023

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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO MEDICAL CANNABIS.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature recognizes that the use of  
2 medical cannabis in Hawaii has been legal since 2000. In 2015,  
3 legislation was passed that established the medical cannabis  
4 dispensary program to ensure access for qualifying patients.  
5 According to the department of health, as of September 2022,  
6 there were 33,725 patients in Hawaii with a valid medical  
7 cannabis registration.

8           The legislature further finds that while thirty-seven  
9 states, three territories, and the District of Columbia have  
10 approved comprehensive medical cannabis programs, only fifteen  
11 states have enacted medical cannabis anti-discrimination  
12 employment laws to protect qualifying patients. Though the  
13 medical use of cannabis has become increasingly accepted,  
14 qualifying patients risk losing their jobs because there are no  
15 clear protections against employment discrimination.

16           The legislature also finds that the ongoing conflict  
17 between state and federal medical cannabis laws causes confusion



1 for employers, who are unsure whether state medical cannabis  
2 laws supersede their power to enforce drug-free workplace  
3 policies against employees. The courts have consistently ruled  
4 in favor of employers when qualifying patients challenge drug-  
5 free workplace policies, yet have not entirely foreclosed on the  
6 possibility that state medical cannabis laws might operate to  
7 protect qualifying patients against employment discrimination.  
8 Without explicit statutory guidance, the courts may not properly  
9 balance the needs of qualifying patients for employment  
10 protections and an employer's need to provide a safe workplace.

11 The purpose of this Act is to:

- 12 (1) Prohibit an employer from discriminating against a  
13 person in hiring, termination, or any term or  
14 condition of employment based on the person's status  
15 as a medical cannabis registry card holder, under  
16 certain conditions;
- 17 (2) Authorize an employer to use a fit-for-duty test for  
18 medical cannabis qualifying patients in potentially  
19 dangerous occupations; and
- 20 (3) Exempt certain occupations from the protections of  
21 this Act.



1 SECTION 2. Section 329-125.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
2 amended to read as follows:

3 **"§329-125.5 Medical cannabis patient and caregiver**

4 **protections.** (a) No school shall refuse to enroll or otherwise  
5 penalize, and no landlord shall refuse to lease property to or  
6 otherwise penalize, a person solely for the person's status as a  
7 qualifying patient or primary caregiver in the medical cannabis  
8 program under this part, unless failing to do so would cause the  
9 school or landlord to lose a monetary or licensing-related  
10 benefit under federal law or regulation; provided that the  
11 qualifying patient or primary caregiver strictly complied with  
12 the requirements of this part; provided further that the  
13 qualifying patient or primary caregiver shall present a medical  
14 cannabis registry card or certificate and photo identification,  
15 to ensure that the qualifying patient or primary caregiver is  
16 validly registered with the department of health pursuant to  
17 section 329-123.

18 (b) For the purposes of medical care, including organ  
19 transplants, a registered qualifying patient's use of cannabis  
20 in compliance with this part shall be considered the equivalent  
21 of the use of any other medication under the direction of a



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1 physician and shall not constitute the use of an illicit  
2 substance or otherwise disqualify a registered qualifying  
3 patient from medical care.

4 (c) Unless a failure to do so would cause the employer to  
5 lose a monetary or licensing-related benefit under a contract or  
6 federal law, an employer shall not discriminate against a person  
7 in hiring, termination, or any term or condition of employment,  
8 other than that contained in a collective bargaining agreement,  
9 if the discrimination is based upon either of the following:

10 (1) The person's status as a medical cannabis registry  
11 card holder; or

12 (2) A registered qualifying patient's positive drug test  
13 for cannabis components or metabolites, unless the  
14 registered qualifying patient was impaired by cannabis  
15 during the hours of employment or in a potentially  
16 dangerous occupation;

17 provided that nothing in this subsection shall abridge any  
18 existing right of an employer to send an employee for medical  
19 evaluation when the employer has safety concerns about the  
20 impairment of the employee; provided further that an employer



1 may take adverse action or discipline an employee who uses or  
2 possesses medical cannabis in the workplace and is impaired.

3 (d) In a potentially dangerous occupation, an employer may  
4 use a fit-for-duty test as a risk-based assessment tool for a  
5 registered qualifying patient.

6 (e) No employer shall have any liability to any employee  
7 who is injured or killed during the performance of the  
8 employee's job if the employee's impairment by medical cannabis  
9 was the sole contributing factor to the employee's death or  
10 injury.

11 (f) Subsection (c) shall not apply to:

12 (1) Law enforcement officers in the State or counties or  
13 employees of a state correctional facility;

14 (2) Firefighters employed by the State or counties;

15 (3) Water safety officers, lifeguards, swimming  
16 instructors, or other employees of the State or  
17 counties responsible for the safety of the public at  
18 swimming pools or on beaches;

19 (4) Employees authorized to carry or use, or both,  
20 firearms on the job;



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- 1        (5) Emergency medical services personnel of the State or  
2            counties;
- 3        (6) Employees who administer or may administer controlled  
4            substances or other drugs to patients, whether in  
5            hospitals, nursing homes, or in emergency situations  
6            that would be encountered by emergency medical  
7            services personnel;
- 8        (7) Employees who work with children, the elderly, or  
9            other vulnerable populations;
- 10       (8) Civil defense emergency management personnel; and
- 11       (9) Employees who operate or are in physical control of  
12           any of the following:
  - 13           (A) Any combination of vehicles that have a gross  
14           combination weight rating or gross combination  
15           weight of 11,794 kilograms or more (26,001 pounds  
16           or more), whichever is greater, inclusive of a  
17           towed unit or units with a gross vehicle weight  
18           rating or gross vehicle weight of more than 4,536  
19           kilograms (10,000 pounds), whichever is greater;
  - 20           (B) Any single vehicle that has a gross vehicle  
21           weight rating or gross vehicle weight of 11,794



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- 1                   or more kilograms (26,001 pounds or more), or any  
2                   such vehicle towing a vehicle with a gross  
3                   vehicle weight rating or gross vehicle weight  
4                   that does not exceed 4,536 kilograms (10,000  
5                   pounds);
- 6           (C) Any single vehicle, or combination of vehicles,  
7                   that does not meet the definition of class A or  
8                   class B, but is either designed to transport  
9                   sixteen or more passengers, including the driver,  
10                   or is transporting material that has been  
11                   designated as hazardous under title 49 United  
12                   States Code section 5103 and is required to be  
13                   placarded under subpart F of title 49 Code of  
14                   Federal Regulations part 172, or is transporting  
15                   any quantity of a material listed as a select  
16                   agent or toxin in title 42 Code of Federal  
17                   Regulations part 73;
- 18           (D) Public utilities, such as the electrical power  
19                   grid or water source;
- 20           (E) Machinery or power equipment; or
- 21           (F) A motor vehicle.



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1           ~~[(e)]~~ (g) No qualifying patient or primary caregiver under  
 2 this part shall be denied custody of, visitation with, or  
 3 parenting time with a minor, and there shall be no presumption  
 4 of neglect or child endangerment, for conduct allowed under this  
 5 part; provided that this subsection shall not apply if the  
 6 qualifying patient's or primary caregiver's conduct created a  
 7 danger to the safety of the minor, as established by a  
 8 preponderance of the evidence.

9           ~~[(d)]~~ (h) This section shall apply to qualifying patients,  
 10 primary caregivers, qualifying out-of-state patients, and  
 11 caregivers of qualifying out-of-state patients who are validly  
 12 registered with the department of health pursuant to this part  
 13 and the administrative rules of the department of health."

14           SECTION 3. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed  
 15 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

16           SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

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INTRODUCED BY: 



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**Report Title:**

Medical Cannabis; Qualifying Patients; Discrimination; Employer; Employee; Potentially Dangerous Occupations; Exemptions

**Description:**

Prohibits an employer from discriminating against a person in hiring, termination, or any term or condition of employment based on the person's status as a medical cannabis registry card holder, under certain conditions. Authorizes an employer to use a fit-for-duty test for medical cannabis qualifying patients in potentially dangerous occupations. Exempts certain occupations.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

