



Use of sales tax on medical cannabis to fund substance abuse treatment, prevention, and education

Background:

Current interpretation of state law in Florida is that the state sales and use tax of 6% applies to retail sales of medical cannabis. Most states that allow medical marijuana impose a tax, most frequently at the retail sales level. Although Florida has made great progress on shutting down 'pill-mills', the state is seeing an explosion of problems with illicit narcotics such as heroin. Research in states that have legalized marijuana suggest that states making investments in prevention and education, particularly for young people, avoid dramatic increases in use of illicit substances. Marijuana, as a schedule 1 substance, is not subject to many of the safeguards and regulations that apply to traditional pharmaceutical products.

Request:

Maintain the existing sales tax on medical marijuana and deposit one-half of the revenue into a trust fund within the Department of Children and Family Services to support drug abuse treatment, prevention, and education.

Rationale:

- There is significant unmet need for substance abuse treatment, prevention, and education services in Florida.
- The emerging opioid crisis in the state is becoming a public health crisis that is likely to get worse in the absence of a concerted effort on behalf of the state to treat addiction and take proactive efforts to prevent further proliferation.
- Along with legalization, whether recreational or medical, is a reduced perception of risk among the population, especially young people.
- Education efforts can counteract this perceived reduction of risk.
- Increased treatment efforts can also help to reduce criminal activity and the state's inmate population.
- Voters were put on notice in the ballot summary that state sales tax would likely apply to sales of medical marijuana, unlike prescription medications and over-the-counter remedies.
- This proposal would be consistent with practice in other states.

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