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NC Lawmakers To Consider Legalizing Medical Marijuana

A new bill aiming to legalize medical marijuana will make its way before North Carolina lawmakers in their next session.

A similar bill died in committee last year, but this time, supporters said they found a new reason for lawmakers to pass it: Tax revenue.

Charlotte state Rep. Kelly Alexander plans to introduce the bill to legalize medical marijuana and said the tax revenue would help the state's budget.

"The estimate I saw last year – (we) would have \$60 to \$100 million flowing into the state coffers if we legalized the medical use," Alexander said.

Rebecca Forbes, who is the president of a group that's pushing to legalize the drug for medical use in the state, said she uses

marijuana every day. She said it's the only thing that's helped her cope with the pain from a cancerous tumor.

"It is illegal, but we don't care," she said. "It saved my own life. I don't care what anybody else thinks."

Joshua Cook, who went to Iraq with the National Guard and came back with epilepsy, said smoking marijuana controls his seizures.

"I can't even drive because of my seizures. But whenever I do this, I don't have them. I haven't had a seizure in eight months," Cook said.

But there are still many skeptics, including state Sen. Bob Rucho.

"I won't support it primarily because of the fact that I want to see that it has a medicinal value," he said.

Others question whether legalizing marijuana for medical use would create more problems than it solves.

Ben Stevenson, a counselor at Charlotte's Substance Abuse Prevention Services, said legalizing the drug would open a door to more abuse.

"People are going to say, 'I have a backache, I need some medical marijuana. I'm depressed, I need some medical marijuana. I lost my job, I need some medical marijuana,'" Stevenson said.

But supporters of the idea aren't backing down.

"It'll keep me alive," Cook said. "If I quit smoking weed for like three days, I'll have a seizure."

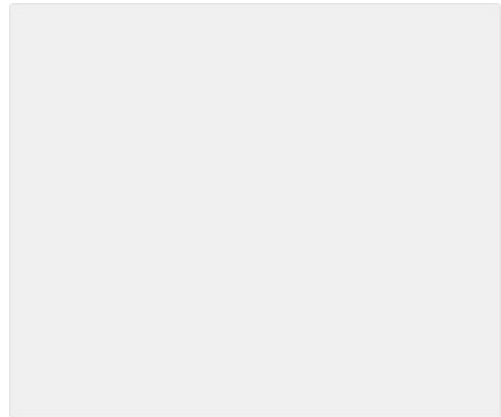
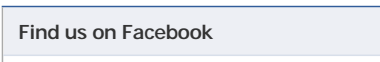
"We're not going to stop using medical marijuana when it helps us," Forbes said. "That's the point here."

The issue could come to a vote in Raleigh as soon as next spring.

Two states have made medical marijuana legal this year, bringing the total to 15 states and the District of Columbia that now allow marijuana for medical use. For a full list of those states, [click here](#).

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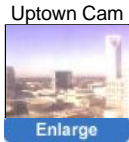
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