

HB 53 - AS AMENDED BY THE HOUSE

20Feb2025... 0272h

2025 SESSION

25-0006
05/08**HOUSE BILL 53**

AN ACT permitting qualifying patients and designated caregivers to cultivate cannabis for therapeutic use.

SPONSORS: Rep. W. Thomas, Hills. 12; Rep. H. Howard, Straf. 4; Rep. Kofalt, Hills. 32

COMMITTEE: Health, Human Services and Elderly Affairs

ANALYSIS

This bill permits qualifying patients and designated caregivers to cultivate cannabis for therapeutic use.

Explanation: Matter added to current law appears in ***bold italics***.Matter removed from current law appears [~~in brackets and struck through~~]

Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

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05/08



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty Five

AN ACT permitting qualifying patients and designated caregivers to cultivate cannabis for therapeutic use.

Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:

1 Use of Therapeutic Cannabis for Therapeutic Purposes; Definitions. Amend RSA 126-X:1, IV to read as follows:

IV. "Cultivation location" means a locked and enclosed site, under the control of an alternative treatment center where cannabis is cultivated, secured with one or more locks or other security devices in accordance with the provisions of this chapter, ***or under the control of a qualifying patient or designated caregiver where cannabis is cultivated and which meets the requirements of this chapter.***

2 Use of Therapeutic Cannabis; Definitions. Amend RSA 126-X:1, VI to read as follows:

VI. "Designated caregiver" means an individual who:

(a) Is at least 21 years of age;

(b)(1) Has agreed to assist with one or more (not to exceed 5) qualifying [~~patient's~~] ***patients in the*** therapeutic use of cannabis, except if the qualifying patient and designated caregiver each live greater than 50 miles from the nearest alternative treatment center, [~~in which case~~] the designated caregiver may assist with the therapeutic use of cannabis for up to 9 qualifying patients; ***or******(2) Has agreed to cultivate cannabis for therapeutic use pursuant to this chapter for no more than one qualifying patient;***

(c) Has never been convicted of a felony or any felony drug-related offense; and

(d) Possesses a valid registry identification card issued pursuant to RSA 126-X:4.

3 New Paragraphs; Use of Cannabis for Therapeutic Purposes; Definitions. Amend RSA 126-X:1 by inserting after paragraph VI-a the following new paragraphs:

VI-b. "Immature cannabis plant" means a cannabis plant that has not flowered and which does not have buds that may be observed by visual examination and which is at least 12 inches tall.

VI-c. "Mature cannabis plant" means a cannabis plant that has flowered and that has buds that may be observed by visual examination.

4 Use of Therapeutic Cannabis; Definitions. Amend RSA 126-X:1, XIII(c) to read as follows:

(c) Cultivation by a designated caregiver or qualifying patient, ***except as provided under RSA 126-X:2, II-a and II-b.***

5 New Paragraphs; Use of Therapeutic Cannabis Purposes; Protections. Amend RSA 126-X:2 by inserting after paragraph II the following new paragraphs:

II-a. Except as provided in RSA 126-X:3, VII(b), a qualifying patient or designated caregiver who has reported to the department a cultivation location that meets the requirements of this chapter, shall not be subject to arrest by state or local law enforcement, prosecution or penalty under state or municipal law, or denied any right or privilege for the therapeutic use of cannabis in accordance with this chapter, if, at the cultivation location, while transporting cannabis and cannabis plants and seedlings to a new cultivation location that has been reported to the department within the prior 21 days, or while transporting cannabis seedlings from an alternative treatment center to the cultivation location, the qualifying patient or designated caregiver possesses or cultivates an amount of cannabis that does not exceed the following:

- (a) Eight ounces of usable cannabis;
- (b) Any amount of unusable cannabis; and
- (c) Three mature cannabis plants, 3 immature cannabis plants, and 12 seedlings.

II-b. A cultivation location under the control of a qualifying patient or designated caregiver shall meet the following requirements:

- (a) It shall be at the qualifying patient's or designated caregiver's residence.
- (b) It shall be reported to the department, except that either the qualifying patient or their designated caregiver, but not both, shall report a cultivation location to the department.
- (c) It shall be locked and enclosed.
- (d) The cannabis plants shall not be subject to public view, including from another private property, without the use of optical aids.
- (e) It shall have a canopy of no more than 50 square feet, except that if more than one qualifying patient, designated caregiver, or both, share a cultivation location, the total canopy of all cannabis plants shall not exceed 100 square feet.

6 Use of Therapeutic Cannabis; Purposes; Protections. Amend RSA 126-X:2, III to read as follows:

III. A designated caregiver may receive compensation for costs, ***not to exceed \$500 per calendar year***, not including labor, associated with assisting a qualifying patient who has designated the ~~[designated]~~ caregiver to assist him or her with the therapeutic use of cannabis. Such compensation shall not constitute the sale of ~~[controlled substances]~~ ***a controlled drug pursuant to RSA 318-B.***

7 Use of Therapeutic Cannabis; Protections. Amend RSA 126-X:2, XV to read as follows:

XV. A laboratory, ***and the employees thereof***, which conducts testing of cannabis ~~[required under rules for]~~ ***delivered to it by*** alternative treatment centers, ~~[adopted under this chapter, and the employees thereof]~~ ***qualifying patients, or designated caregivers***, shall not be subject to arrest by state or local law enforcement, prosecution or penalty under state or municipal law, or search, for acting pursuant to this chapter and department rules to possess cannabis on the premises of the laboratory for the purposes of testing, and, in the case of a laboratory employee, denied any right or privilege for working for such a laboratory.

8 Use of Therapeutic Cannabis; Prohibitions and Limits. Amend RSA 126-X:3, I to read as follows:

I. A qualifying patient may use ***and a qualifying patient or designated caregiver may cultivate*** cannabis on privately-owned real property only with written permission of the property owner or, in the case of leased property, with the permission of the tenant in possession of the property, except that a tenant shall not allow a qualifying patient to smoke cannabis on rented property if smoking on the property violates the lease or the lessor's rental policies that apply to all tenants at the property. ***A tenant or guest of a tenant shall not cultivate cannabis on***

rented property if the lessor has prohibited therapeutic cannabis cultivation. However, a tenant may permit a qualifying patient to use cannabis on leased property by ingestion or inhalation through vaporization even if smoking is prohibited by the lease or rental policies. For purposes of this chapter, vaporization shall mean the inhalation of cannabis without the combustion of the cannabis.

9 New Subparagraph; Use of Therapeutic Cannabis; Registry Identification Cards. Amend RSA 126-X:4, I by inserting after subparagraph (h) the following new subparagraph:

(i) The qualifying patient's cultivation location, if any.

10 New Subparagraph; Use of Therapeutic Cannabis; Registry Identification Cards. Amend RSA 126-X:4, II by inserting after subparagraph (h) the following new subparagraph:

(i) The designated caregiver's cultivation location, where he or she may cultivate cannabis on behalf of a single qualifying patient who has not reported a cultivation location.

11 Use of Therapeutic Cannabis; Registry Identification Cards. Amend RSA 126-X:4, IX(a) to read as follows:

IX.(a) A qualifying patient shall notify the department before changing his or her designated caregiver ***or cultivation location. A designated caregiver shall notify the department before changing his or her cultivation location.***

12 Use of Therapeutic Cannabis; Registry Identification Cards. Amend RSA 126-X:4, XI to read as follows:

XI.(a) The department shall create and maintain a confidential registry of each individual who has applied for and received a registry identification card as a qualifying patient or a designated caregiver in accordance with the provisions of this chapter. Each entry in the registry shall contain the qualifying patient's or designated caregiver's name, mailing address, date of birth, date of registry identification card issuance, effective date of ***the*** registry identification ***card***, date of registry identification card expiration, ~~and~~ random 10-digit identification number, ***a cultivation location, if any.*** The confidential registry and the information contained in it shall be exempt from disclosure under RSA 91-A.

(b)(1) Except as specifically provided in this chapter, no person shall have access to any information about qualifying patients or designated caregivers in the department's confidential registry, or any information otherwise maintained by the department about providers and alternative treatment centers, except for authorized employees of the department in the course of their official duties and local and state law enforcement personnel who have detained or arrested an individual who claims to be engaged in the therapeutic use of cannabis.

(2) If a local or state law enforcement officer submits a sworn affidavit to the department affirming that he or she has probable cause to believe cannabis is possessed ***or cultivated*** at a specific address, an authorized employee for the department may disclose whether the location is associated with a qualifying patient, designated caregiver, or cultivation location ~~[of an alternative treatment center]~~.

(3) If a local or state law enforcement officer submits a sworn affidavit to the department affirming that he or she has probable cause to believe a specific individual possesses ***or cultivates*** cannabis, an authorized employee for the department may disclose whether the person is a qualifying patient or a designated caregiver, provided that the law enforcement officer provides the person's name and address or name and date of birth.

(4) Requests by law enforcement officials under this section to the department pursuant to a sworn affidavit, search warrant, or court order, regardless of whether or not the name or address was found in the registry, shall be confidential under this chapter and exempt from disclosure under RSA 91-A. Aggregate data relative to such requests may be made public if it does not contain any identifying information regarding the specific law enforcement request.

(5) Counsel for the department may notify law enforcement officials about falsified or fraudulent information submitted to the department where counsel has reason to believe the information is false or falsified.

13 New Paragraph; Use of Therapeutic Cannabis; Registry Identification Cards. Amend RSA 126-X:4 by inserting after paragraph XII the following new paragraph:

XIII.(a) No later than December 1, 2025, the department shall allow existing and new qualifying patients and designated caregivers to report a cultivation location provided that:

(1) A qualifying patient may report a cultivation location only if he or she does not have a designated caregiver who has reported a cultivation location.

(2) A designated caregiver may report a cultivation location only if he or she does not have a qualifying patient who has reported a cultivation location.

(b) No individual shall report a cultivation location if such individual's permission to cultivate has been revoked pursuant to RSA 126-X:3, VIII(b).

14 Use of Therapeutic Cannabis; Affirmative Defense. Amend RSA 126-X:5, I to read as follows:

I. It shall be an affirmative defense for any person charged with manufacturing, possessing, having under his or her control, selling, purchasing, prescribing, administering, transporting, or possessing with intent to sell, dispense, or compound cannabis, cannabis analog, or any preparation containing cannabis, if:

(a) The actor is a qualifying patient who has been issued a valid registry identification card, was in possession of cannabis in a quantity and location permitted pursuant to this chapter, and was engaged in the therapeutic use of cannabis;

(b) The actor is a designated caregiver who has been issued a valid registry identification card, was in possession of cannabis in a quantity and location permitted pursuant to this chapter, and was engaged in the therapeutic use of cannabis on behalf of a qualifying patient; or

(c) The actor is an employee of a laboratory conducting testing required for alternative treatment centers pursuant to rules adopted under this chapter ***or that tests cannabis provided to it by qualifying patients and designated caregivers.***

15 New Subparagraph; Use of Therapeutic Cannabis; Alternative Treatment Centers. Amend RSA 126-X:8, XIII by inserting after subparagraph (c) the following new subparagraph:

(d) A qualifying patient or designated caregiver shall not obtain from an alternative treatment center more than 12 seedlings during a 3-month period.

16 Use of Cannabis for Therapeutic Purposes; Prohibitions and Limits. Amend RSA 126-X:3, VII to read as follows:

VII.(a) The department may revoke the registry identification card of a qualifying patient or designated caregiver for violation of rules adopted by the department or for violation of any other provision of this chapter, including for obtaining more than 2 ounces of cannabis in any 10-day period in violation of RSA 126-X:8, XIII(b), and the qualifying patient or designated caregiver shall be subject to any other penalties established in law for the violation.

(b) The department may revoke a qualifying patient's or designated caregiver's permission to cultivate cannabis for a violation of the rules adopted by the department or for a violation of any provision of this chapter.

17 Use of Cannabis for Therapeutic Purposes; Alternative Treatment Centers. Amend RSA 126-X:8, XV(a) to read as follows:

XV.(a)(1) An alternative treatment center shall not possess or cultivate cannabis in excess of the following quantities:

~~[(1)]~~ (A) Eighty ***mature*** cannabis plants, 160 ~~[seedlings]~~ ***immature cannabis plants***, and 80 ounces of usable cannabis ~~[or 6 ounces of usable cannabis per qualifying patient]~~; and

~~[(2)]~~ (B) Three mature cannabis plants, 12 ~~[seedlings]~~ ***immature cannabis plants***, and 6 ounces ***of usable cannabis*** for each qualifying patient registered ~~[as a qualifying patient]~~ under this chapter.

(2) An alternative treatment center shall not be limited in the number of seedlings it can possess or cultivate.

18 Use of Cannabis for Therapeutic Purposes; Departmental Rules. Amend RSA 126-X:6, III(a)(15) to read as follows:

(15) Procedures for determining and enforcing the daily maximum amount of therapeutic cannabis which an alternative treatment center may cultivate or possess pursuant to RSA 126-X:8, XV(a)(1).

19 Effective Date. This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.