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## South Dakota (2026) Testimony opposing repealing medical cannabis access

My name is Paul Armentano. I am testifying to you today as the Deputy Director of NORML – the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws. NORML is a public interest group that advocates on behalf of those patients and others who use cannabis responsibly.

I am the author of several books on cannabis, health, and public safety and my writing on marijuana has been featured in over two dozen academic anthologies. One of my books, *Clinical Applications for Cannabis & Cannabinoids: A Review of the Recent Scientific Literature*, summarizes over 450 peer-reviewed studies assessing the safety and efficacy of cannabis and cannabinoids in over 20 distinct patient populations. It has been translated into multiple languages.

I have appeared as a court-certified expert witness on matters specific to the medicinal use of cannabis. I also helped create a curriculum that is required training in several states for physicians who wish to issue medical cannabis recommendations.

I urge you to vote 'no' on Senate Bill 181, which seeks to repeal the state's medical cannabis law 90 days after it is federally rescheduled from Schedule I to Schedule III.

This bill hurts South Dakota patients. That's because moving cannabis from Schedule I to Schedule III federally does not provide a regulatory pathway for patients to access it. Rather, it is simply an acknowledgement from the federal government that cannabis possesses "accepted medical use" in the United States." This means that there will remain no way for patients to safely and reliably access medical cannabis other than through state-specific programs – even after it is federally rescheduled.

Nearly 70 percent of practicing physicians acknowledge that cannabis possesses legitimate therapeutic utility, according to polling compiled by the US Centers for Disease Control, and more than a quarter of clinicians nationwide have recommended it to their patients. Forty states and several US territories regulate medical cannabis access. None of these states have ever repealed or rolled back these medical cannabis access laws. That's because they are beneficial to patients, and they are supported by most physicians and healthcare professionals.

Over 18,000 South Dakotans<sup>1</sup> are currently registered with the state and rely on medical cannabis access. In recent years, this total has increased dramatically. This rise in participation speaks to the safety, acceptance, and widespread acceptance of cannabis as a legitimate medicine. It is cruel and inhumane to deny these patients access to a therapy that works for them.

For these reasons, I urge you to reject SB 181.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://medcannabis.sd.gov/Updates/Data.aspx>