

MILWAUKEE – I commend Lt. Gov. Barnes and Rep. Sheila Stubbs for continuing to spotlight the need for marijuana decriminalization. Every legislative session since 2015, I have introduced bills to decriminalize and legalize marijuana.

Support for legalizing and decriminalizing marijuana in Wisconsin has grown to be popular for many reasons. Including so sick people can get their medicine, because it is an additional source of revenue, and also to alleviate the burden on our criminal justice system. Our sick neighbors shouldn't be subject to criminal penalty or jail time for getting medicine they can readily get in other states. Moderate taxation on marijuana sales would help fill budget holes. Decriminalization will reduce arrests of non-violent drug offenders and decrease the population in our over-crowded prisons. It would also ensure we're not needlessly giving someone a criminal record, making it harder for them for find a job, rent an apartment, and live productive lives.

Decriminalization is both a fiscal and moral imperative. Harvard economist Jeffrey Miron estimated that Wisconsin spent $170.5 million in 2008 on marijuana prohibition.



Across the nation, states are quickly moving to capture the benefits of both legalization and decriminalization with 33 states allowing medical use, 15 states have decriminalized marijuana, and 11 states have allowed recreational use. It is long past time for Wisconsin to take this next step.

The latest Marquette poll shows 59% of Wisconsin residents support making marijuana legal. Republican leaders in the legislature will continue to ignore their constituents – and our budget - at their political peril.