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## **HB 14-1364 - Concerning the Addition of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder to the List of Debilitating Medical Conditions for the Purposes of Medical Marijuana Use**

**The Colorado Psychiatric Society opposes this legislation.**

- **There is a process in place to add medical conditions to the medical marijuana list**
- **There is insufficient medical evidence that marijuana is an effective treatment for PTSD.**

### **Authorized Process for Adding a Medical Condition**

The Constitution and Board of Health rules currently have a process in place for adding certain diagnoses to the list of medical conditions that are authorized to be treated with medical marijuana. Article XVIII, Section 14 (III) of the Colorado Constitution specifies certain illnesses as “debilitating conditions” and allows that other medical conditions may be added when “approved by the state health agency, pursuant to its rule making authority” Accordingly, the responsibility for adding indications for the use of marijuana for medical purposes is the responsibility of the state health agency rather than the legislature.

### **Insufficient Evidence that Marijuana is an Effective Treatment for PTSD**

- The proposed bill does not explain upon which criteria post-traumatic stress disorder would be diagnosed, and by whom. In DSM-5, the post-traumatic stress disorder set is heavily revised.
- The last time this issue was considered by the Veteran Affairs Administration, they concluded “It is VHA policy to prohibit VA providers from completing forms seeking recommendations or opinions regarding a Veteran’s participation in a State marijuana program.”
- The FDA does not approve the use of marijuana for medical purposes. Instead, marijuana remains a Schedule I substance on the federal level. While the state has legalized marijuana, it remains in violation of federal law. Any veterans with PTSD using marijuana could threaten their disability payments or services at the VA.
- There is no scientific evidence to support the use of marijuana as an effective treatment for any psychiatric disorder, including post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Several studies show cannabis may exacerbate or hasten the onset of psychiatric disorders especially in young people. There are also neurotoxic effects secondary to cannabis use especially in adolescents.
- Marijuana is associated with serious cognitive problems such as short-term memory deficits, poor concentration and attention, and poor information processing.
- Persons with post-traumatic stress disorder can already obtain and use marijuana through the state’s recreational marijuana system.
- PTSD is frequently comorbid with Substance Use Disorders and using marijuana to treat PTSD creates the risk of causing a second diagnosis.
- Side effects of marijuana can include paranoia which may aggravate PTSD.

- Quality medical care is based on evidence derived from well-designed clinical trials. Evidenced based studies have shown that a combination of psychopharmacology and CBT (Cognitive Behavior Therapy) with an exposure component is the gold standard for PTSD. In addition, other modalities have been studied and found to be helpful in improving symptoms of PTSD including DBT (Dialectical behavior therapy – which emphasizes development of cognitive coping skills), EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) and group therapies.

**Conclusion:** The Colorado Psychiatric Society asks you to oppose HB 1364.

**References:**

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US Department of Veteran's Affairs. *Treatment of PTSD*. <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/treatment/therapy-med/treatment-ptsd.asp>

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