

Rep. Earl Blumenauer
“Member Day: Testimony and Proposals on the Opioid Crisis”
October 11, 2017

As this hearing today highlights, opioids have wreaked havoc on our country, killing people and devastating families. I am here today to offer an alternative treatment for pain, PTSD, and a number of other health problems—medical cannabis.

Despite the fact that more than 95 percent of Americans live in states that have legalized some form of medical cannabis, federal policy is blocking biomedical research of marijuana.

This is outrageous!

We owe it to patients and their families to allow for the research physicians need to understand marijuana’s benefits and risks and determine proper use and dosage. The federal government should get out of the way to allow for this long overdue research.

Unfortunately, states cannot address this research gag on their own. Congress must act to allow for the research of marijuana—which I stipulate would be a safer, less addictive alternative than opioids for some health problems.

And, it’s not just me who thinks this. I have veterans banging down my door seeking alternatives to opioids. Many veterans are in an untenable situation-- Untreated chronic pain can increase the risk of suicide, but poorly managed opioid regimens can also be fatal. The fact that veterans are TWICE as likely to die from accidental opioid overdoses than their civilian counterparts to get Congress off the dime.

Dr. Andy Harris—a well-known marijuana prohibitionist—and I—the member of Congress from Portlandia—have teamed up to introduce the Medical Marijuana Research Act. This bill would create a pathway for qualified researchers to conduct research using marijuana. Senators Hatch and Schatz have a similar bill on the Senate side.

I ask that this Committee hold a hearing on the bill as patients desperately need a safer, less addictive alternative to opioids.