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Contact: Matt Garcia-Sierra, m.garciasierra@nmlegis.gov, 505.205.5486

Health committee punts marijuana bill, with issues, to next committee

Santa Fe, NM- Marijuana legislation was heard in the House Health and Human Services Committee today. Saturday, [HB 12](#) and [HB 17](#) were up for public comment, and in the second day of committee hearing, HB 12 passing the committee and a separate measure, HB 17, was tabled. In the 60-day legislative session, three different versions of legalization have been brought up for consideration in both chambers—HB 12, HB 17 and its identical bill SB 13, and SB 288.

“It is frustrating that we continue to discuss major social and economic concerns with these bills only to agree to pass them on to another committee,” said Representative Gail Armstrong (R-Magdalena). “Both House bills have good and bad, but having drastically different versions, including those in the Senate, leads to confusion about the legalization process. It appears we are focusing more on getting a bill passed rather than how these bills will impact our communities.”

House Democrat lawmakers are framing legalization as a silver arrow, designed to alleviate New Mexico’s economic problems. However, according to the [Tax Foundation](#), legalization in the state is predicted to bring in approximately \$61 million in revenue, representative of a small portion of the state’s \$7 billion dollar budget, while the potential societal costs of legalization have not been quantified. The Governor’s economic shutdown, and \$2 billion dollar spending splurge in her first two years, are expected to reign significant financial repercussions on the state that had just come out of the great recession, are just a few of the reasons why House Democrats continue to push the budgetary benefits of legalization.

“A major concern with these bills is that they tie the hands of law enforcement.” said Rep. Luis Terrazas (R-Silver City). “I am concerned that with so many other issues surrounding legalization, we may be setting this bill up to fail, and ultimately harm our state in the process. Even though I do not agree with this legislation, the legislation we heard today is premature and not ready to become law.”

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