

House Committee on Health and Welfare

Minutes of Meeting
2022 First Extraordinary Session
February 16, 2022

I. CALL TO ORDER

Representative Lawrence A. "Larry" Bagley, chairman of the House Committee on Health and Welfare, called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. in Room 6, in the state capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

II. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representative Lawrence A. "Larry" Bagley, chairman
Representative Kenny R. Cox
Representative Michael Charles Echols
Representative Jason Hughes
Representative C. Travis Johnson
Representative Ed Larvadain, III
Representative Wayne McMahan
Representative Dustin Miller
Representative Robert "Bob" Owen
Representative Thomas A. Pressly
Representative Christopher Turner, vice chairman

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Representative Roy Daryl Adams
Representative Robby Carter
Representative Raymond J. Crews
Representative Julie Emerson
Representative Patricia "Pat" Moore
Representative Larry Selders
Representative Joseph A. Stagni

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Meah Johnson, attorney
Drew Murray, legislative analyst
Kristy Neubrandner, committee administrative assistant

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES PRESENT:

Representative Joseph Marino
Representative Scott McKnight
Representative Joseph Orgeron
Myrtis Jarrell, sergeant at arms
Stephen Louis, assistant sergeant at arms
Danny Leming, assistant chief sergeant at arms
Keshauna Murphy, executive assistant, sergeant at arms
Nicholas Cole, attorney, House Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture, and Rural Development

III. BUSINESS

At the request of Chairman Bagley, Drew Murray, senior legislative analyst for the House Committee on Health and Welfare, described the two documents that had been provided as handouts to committee members by staff. One document was a copy of Act No. 424 of the 2021 RS. The other document was a printout of the subparagraph of law cited on the meeting agenda pertaining to research on medical marijuana (R.S. 40:1046(H)(2)(c)). At Chairman Bagley's direction, Mr. Murray read aloud this subparagraph of law.

Discussion with the Louisiana State University Agricultural Center and the Southern University Agricultural Center on the impact of the state law enacted by Act No. 424 of the 2021 RS which, as of January 1, 2022, has authorized patient access to medical marijuana in raw or crude form

This item was not discussed.

Updates from the Louisiana State University Agricultural Center and the Southern University Agricultural Center on medical marijuana research efforts authorized by R.S. 40:1046(H)(2)(c)

Chairman Bagley asked officials from both the Louisiana State University Agricultural Center (LSU Ag Center) and the Southern University Agricultural Center (SU Ag Center) to provide an update on their respective research efforts and reports referred to in R.S. 40:1046(H)(2)(c).

Janana Snowden, SU Ag Center, P.O. Box 10010, Baton Rouge, LA 70813, (225) 771-2734, spoke for information only. She provided a brief overview of the current activities of the medical marijuana program administered by the SU Ag Center and its partner, Ilera Holistic Healthcare. Dr. Snowden stated that the SU Ag Center has not conducted research into the therapeutic use of medical marijuana; however, she added that the center has conducted research into the social science and policy aspects of medical marijuana. The example she provided was a doctoral dissertation titled

The Policy Implications of Legalized Medical Marijuana that was completed in May of 2018. Dr. Snowden stated that the SU Ag Center also submits an annual report to the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry with the most recent submission being on January 15, 2022. She added that the SU Ag Center created an interdisciplinary research team that is prepared to conduct research into the therapeutic use of marijuana as outlined in the statute.

Hampton Grunewald, LSU Ag Center, 101 Efferson Hall, Baton Rouge, LA 70803, spoke for information only. He stated that the LSU Ag Center created a therapeutic cannabis research committee to review faculty requests for research funding on cannabis. Mr. Grunewald said that this committee has approved eight internal research projects and has three additional projects pending approval. He provided a brief overview of the projects. Mr. Grunewald added that because none of the research findings have been published, details about the findings are considered preliminary and cannot be released to the public.

C. Reuben Walker, SU Ag Center, Ashford O. Williams Hall, 181 B.A. Little Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70813, (337) 344-8634, spoke for information only. He acknowledged that the SU Ag Center has not provided the report referred to in the statute, but the center would be happy to provide the report.

Representative Jason Hughes read aloud for the record the pertinent provisions of R.S. 40:1046(H)(2)(c). Representative Hughes pointed out the statute's ambiguity regarding the report, noting that the statute says the centers "may" conduct research but then says that the centers "shall" provide a report on the aforementioned research. Because the statute seems to require a report on optional research, Representative Hughes characterized the statute as unclear.

Representative Larvadain asked Mr. Grunewald if the LSU Ag Center is able to provide a research report. Mr. Grunewald answered that the LSU Ag Center would be able to provide a report with a general overview of the data that has been collected, but that some details cannot be released to the public because of contract agreements to maintain the privacy of intellectual property. He noted that any report submitted to the committee would be considered a public record.

Representative Larvadain asked Dr. Snowden if the doctoral dissertation she mentioned earlier is complete. She said it is complete and that the center plans to conduct a follow-up at the five-year mark, which will be in 2023. She also added that the center is conducting research on industrial hemp, noting that it is easier to conduct research on hemp since marijuana is classified in the federal controlled dangerous substances schedules as a Schedule I drug.

Mr. Grunewald pointed out that the original intent of the medical marijuana legislation was to provide institutions of higher education with an additional revenue stream. He also clarified that the state does not provide funding for the medical marijuana programs at the SU Ag Center and the LSU Ag Center; he stated that the funding comes from the centers' private vendors.

Representative Joseph Marino, House District 85, General Government Building, Suite 4300, 200 Derbigny Street, Gretna, LA 70053, (504) 361-6013, spoke for information only. He elaborated on the provisions of the state's medical marijuana law, R.S. 40:1046, that had not been considered to that point in the meeting.

Witness cards submitted by individuals who did not speak are as follows: 1 for information only. Witness cards are included in the committee records.

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Representative McMahan offered a motion to adjourn. Without objection, the motion passed by a vote of 11 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Bagley, Cox, Echols, Hughes, Travis Johnson, Larvadain, McMahan, Dustin Miller, Robert Owen, Pressly, and Turner voted yea.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:03 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman Lawrence A. "Larry" Bagley
House Committee on Health and Welfare

Date adopted: March 23, 2022