




Conor M. Baldwin  
Chief Financial Officer

Austin Ball  
Deputy CFO

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Thomas A. Golden, Jr., City Manager 

**FROM:** Conor Baldwin, Chief Financial Officer

**CC:** Eric Lamarche, Veteran's Agent  
Lisa Golden, Director of Health & Human Services

**DATE:** August 22, 2023

**SUBJECT: MOTION RESPONSE: 5/9/2023 - C. Yem - Req. City Mgr. And The Mayor Draft a Letter Urging Massachusetts Senators and Congresswoman Lori Trahan to Support H.R. 8197 "Veterans Equal Access Act" On Behalf of The Entire City Council.**

Enclosed is a draft letter which, upon approval by the City Council, will be forwarded to the offices of US Representative Lori Trahan, as well as to the offices of Senator Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey. The house bill referenced in the motion (H.B. 8197) was from the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress (2021-2022). However, an identical bill has been filed in the current, 118<sup>th</sup> Congress (H.B. 2431). The language of the bill is identical and is referenced in the letter to Lowell's Congressional delegation.

The bill, otherwise known as the "Veterans Equal Access Act", directs the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to authorize VA health care providers to (1) provide veterans with recommendations and opinions regarding participation in their state's marijuana programs, and (2) complete forms reflecting such recommendations and opinions. The bill was introduced by Representative Brian Mast (R-FL-21) and was referred on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, to the House Veterans' Affairs committee and then further referred by the committee to the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health on April 14<sup>th</sup>.

A copy of the legislation is enclosed for your reference. According to Congress.gov, the bill has 21 current cosponsors from both parties.

Please let me know if there are any questions.



Thomas A. Golden, Jr.  
*City Manager*

August 22, 2023

Congresswoman Lori Trahan  
2439 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Elizabeth Warren  
309 Hart Senate Office  
Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Ed Markey  
255 Dirksen Senate Office  
Building  
Washington, DC 20510

**RE: Support Letter for House Bill 2431 (i.e. the “Veterans Equal Access Act”)**

Dear Congresswoman Trahan, Senator Warren, and Senator Markey,

On behalf of the Honorable Mayor Sokhary Chau and the Member of the Lowell City Council, please accept this letter of support relative to H. R. 2431, currently pending before the Subcommittee on Health. The bill would authorize the Department of Veterans Affairs health care providers to provide recommendations and opinions to veterans regarding participation in State marijuana programs. On May 9, 2023, the Lowell City Council voted unanimously on a motion—sponsored by Councilor Paul Ratha Yem—to support the bill.

Although the City of Lowell is home to thousands of veterans, many of whom would qualify for medical marijuana as a result of service connected disabilities, veterans are not able to use a drug that many say is far safer than the opioids veterans are frequently prescribed to manage pain. For Lowell and the 71,000 total Massachusetts veterans using a Veterans Administration facility for healthcare or the 11,000 who are 100% disabled as a result of their service, veterans cannot get a recommendation from their doctors to get a medical marijuana card or even ask their doctors for advice about use of marijuana.

Consequentially, many veterans are turning to more dangerous or addictive drugs because they simply have no alternative. Veterans are more susceptible to opioid addiction as they are more likely to suffer from chronic pain. In addition, many veterans suffer from mental health problems like Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (“PTSD”), and are more susceptible to abuse drugs and alcohol.

I respectfully request that you support passage of this legislation, which will unlock this benefit. This is a question of access and equity for our veterans. Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Golden, Jr.  
City Manager

118TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 2431

To authorize Department of Veterans Affairs health care providers to provide recommendations and opinions to veterans regarding participation in State marijuana programs.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 30, 2023

Mr. MAST (for himself, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. JOYCE of Ohio, Ms. LEE of California, Mr. COHEN, Mr. CORREA, Ms. CROCKETT, Mr. CROW, Ms. ESCOBAR, Mr. GAETZ, Ms. MACE, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. MOSKOWITZ, Ms. NORTON, Mr. PETERS, Ms. SCANLON, and Ms. TITUS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

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## A BILL

To authorize Department of Veterans Affairs health care providers to provide recommendations and opinions to veterans regarding participation in State marijuana programs.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Veterans Equal Access  
5 Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. PROVISION BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AF-**  
2 **FAIRS HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS OF REC-**  
3 **COMMENDATIONS AND OPINIONS REGARDING**  
4 **VETERAN PARTICIPATION IN STATE MARI-**  
5 **JUANA PROGRAMS.**

6 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—Notwithstanding any other provi-  
7 sion of law, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall author-  
8 ize physicians and other health care providers employed  
9 by the Department of Veterans Affairs to—

10 (1) provide recommendations and opinions to  
11 veterans who are residents of States with State  
12 marijuana programs regarding the participation of  
13 veterans in such State marijuana programs; and

14 (2) complete forms reflecting such recommenda-  
15 tions and opinions.

16 (b) **STATE DEFINED.**—In this section, the term  
17 “State” means each of the several States, the District of  
18 Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, any terri-  
19 tory or possession of the United States, and each federally  
20 recognized Indian Tribe.

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