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POLITICS AND POLICY
Oklahoma Governor Shows Support for Testing a Form of Medical Marijuana
Gov. Mary Fallin Asks Oklahoma Lawmakers to Allow Tests of Cannabidiol Oil for Treating Disorders in Children

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By JULIA HARTE
Aug. 13, 2014 5:05 p.m. ET

Oklahoma Gov. Mary Fallin on Wednesday called on state lawmakers to allow medical trials exploring the use of cannabidiol oil, a nonpsychoactive component of marijuana, for treating disorders that cause seizures and strokes in young children.

If lawmakers back the Republican governor's effort, Oklahoma would join a string of conservative-leaning states that have recently sanctioned limited use of cannabidiol oil, or CBD. Ten states, including Alabama, Kentucky and Mississippi, legalized some form of CBD this year.

The governor said she is still opposed to legalizing pot for recreational and most medical uses.

In February, the Epilepsy Foundation applauded states that allowed clinical trials of CBD, noting that animal studies and anecdotal reports have pointed to some effectiveness. The nonprofit organization said more research is needed.

A 2014 study published by the Cochrane Collaboration, a nonprofit network of health-care academics, said no reliable conclusions can yet be drawn on cannabinoids as a treatment for epilepsy.

Still, legalizing CBD trials is growing in popularity, allowing states to respond to demand from some constituents without passing comprehensive medical marijuana laws, said Karmen Hanson, medical marijuana policy expert for the National Conference of State Legislatures.

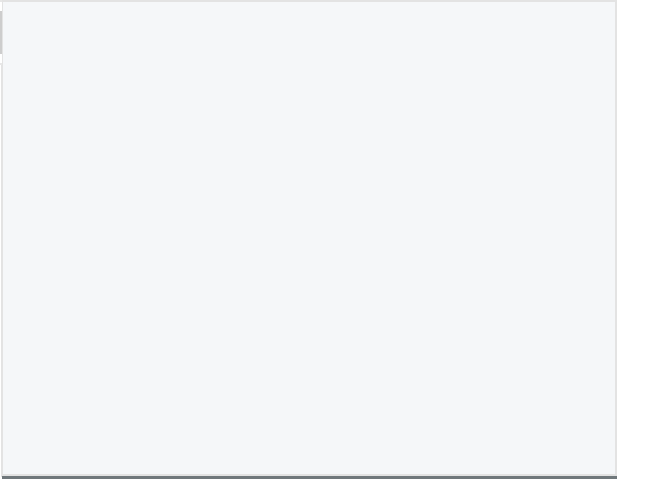
Cases of "cannabis refugees" from Oklahoma—families who move to different states to seek medical marijuana treatments for their children—have made headlines this past year.

In the 2013 legislative session, a bill aiming to legalize medical marijuana failed in the Oklahoma state senate's Health and Human Services Committee, chaired by state Sen. Brian Crain, a Republican.

Mr. Crain on Wednesday voiced support for limited trials of CBD.

"We have children who are suffering seizures, and if there's something we can do for them, without increasing the risk for substance abuse, we have to try all the options," he said. But Mr. Crain said he would continue to oppose broader marijuana-legalization efforts.

This week, an activist group is winding up a campaign to get a measure legalizing medical marijuana on Oklahoma's general election ballot in November. Oklahomans for Health has registered more than 24,000 new voters in the process, founder Chip Paul said.



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"It's clear that there's a giant disconnect between the people of Oklahoma and the politicians" when it comes to support for medical marijuana, said Mr. Paul.

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