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*By Aarón Torres, The Dallas Morning News (TNS).*

AUSTIN, Texas — Medical marijuana should be legal in Texas, a majority of Texans believe, according to a poll released Thursday by the [Hobby School of Public Affairs at the University of Houston](#).

The poll found that 82% of Texans support the Legislature passing a bill that would

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penalty that would be similar to a traffic ticket. And 49% of the state's residents "strongly support" decriminalizing marijuana.

While 66% of those polled said they believe legalization would be good for state and local government revenue, there were concerns by many about whether it would encourage increased use of marijuana by young Texans: 40% believe legalization would increase the use of pot by those under age 21, 15% said it would decrease underage use, and 45% said they believe it would have no effect.

On the long-running debate over whether marijuana is a "gateway drug" to other illegal substances, 30% said legalization would make people more likely to use other illegal drugs, 30% said it would make people less likely to do so, and 40% said it would have no impact.

The poll was conducted Jan. 9-19.

Medical marijuana use has gained steam over recent years. According to the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, 37 states and District of Columbia, have laws permitting marijuana for medical use.

Last summer, Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller [announced he was in favor of legalizing the drug for medicinal purposes.](#)

But it faces an uphill battle again this session.

In Texas, possession of up to 2 ounces is currently a Class B misdemeanor, [punishable by up to 180 days in jail](#) and a fine of up to \$2,000. Possession of more than 2 ounces could result in up to a year in jail, and more than 4 ounces is a felony. Past attempts to decrease the criminal penalty in Texas have not passed in the Legislature.

Currently, Texas allows residents to use cannabis-related substances for medicinal

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neurodegenerative diseases can use the program.

The Compassionate Use Program is run by the Texas Department of Public Safety and only three licensed dispensaries operate in Texas, but more licenses may be awarded.

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