

The Georgia Cannabis Freedom Act as a Model for Sensible Cannabis Legislation

The Georgia Cannabis Freedom Act (GCFA), proposed by the Grassroots Association in February 2025, serves as a forward-thinking blueprint for comprehensive cannabis reform. Georgia's current framework remains limited to low-THC medical oils under the 2019 Hope Act, with ongoing debates over expansions like SB 220—this proposed act repeals outdated prohibitions and establishes a consumer-driven system. It recognizes cannabis as a versatile, renewable resource, legalizing it across multiple dimensions without arbitrary restrictions like THC caps.

By framing cannabis policy around four key "legs"—medical use, adult use, agricultural use, and integration as a food product—the GCFA promotes public health, personal freedoms, economic growth, and sustainability. This approach avoids the pitfalls of piecemeal reforms seen in other states, ensuring balanced regulation that prioritizes safety, equity, and opportunity. Below, I'll outline how the GCFA establishes these four legs, weaving in its provisions for potential economic benefits, such as job creation, tax revenue, and rural development.

1. Medical Use: Expanding Access to Health and Wellness

The GCFA positions medical cannabis as a foundational pillar by broadening access beyond Georgia's current restrictive low-THC program. Patients of any age (with parental consent for minors) can use full-plant cannabis for any condition, certified by a healthcare provider, without needing a state registry. This eliminates bureaucratic hurdles, allowing for personalized treatment options like oils, tinctures, or edibles tailored to symptoms.

Private insurers can cover prescribed cannabis, and Medicaid is encouraged to do the same, making it more affordable. State universities gain funding from the Georgia Cannabis Authority (GCA) to conduct research, fostering evidence-based advancements in areas like pain management or epilepsy treatment.

Economic Benefits: By integrating medical cannabis into healthcare, the act could reduce reliance on pharmaceuticals, lowering overall medical costs. Tax revenue from commercial sales (detailed below) allocates 19% to public health and addiction services, potentially generating millions for mental health programs and substance abuse support—estimated at \$50-100 million annually based on similar models in states like Colorado.

2. Adult Use: Promoting Responsible Personal Freedoms

For adult recreational use, the GCFA legalizes possession, cultivation, and consumption for those 21 and older, treating cannabis akin to alcohol. Adults can possess up to 2 ounces of flower or 28 grams of concentrates in public, with no limits at home. Consumption is allowed on private property, in licensed venues, or in public spaces where tobacco is permitted, emphasizing non-discrimination, no one can lose jobs, housing, or custody rights solely for lawful use (except in federally regulated safety roles).

This leg ensures adults have the right to choose products based on preference, without potency limits, reducing black-market reliance and enhancing safety through tested, labeled goods.

Economic Benefits: Legal adult use opens retail markets, with no cap on licenses to spur competition. The act's tiered excise tax—5% on flower, 7% on infused products, 10% on concentrates—mirrors alcohol taxation, with standard sales taxes added. Revenue distribution includes 38% to education (boosting schools and training) and 9% to rural economic development (infrastructure and small business loans). Projections from comparable states suggest Georgia could see \$200-500 million in annual tax revenue, creating thousands of jobs in retail and distribution while cutting enforcement costs from arrests.

3. Agricultural Use: Harnessing Cannabis as a Renewable Crop

The GCFA elevates agriculture by recognizing cannabis as a sustainable, fast-growing resource (90–120 day cycles) suitable for textiles, biofuels, and soil regeneration. Adults can cultivate up to 6 plants per person (12 per household) in secure, private spaces for personal use, but not for sale—preventing unregulated commerce while empowering self-sufficiency.

Commercially, the GCA issues unlimited licenses for cultivation, prioritizing Georgia residents and small businesses. It partners with agricultural extension services for farmer training, especially in rural areas, and offers incentives like a 2% excise tax reduction for eco-friendly practices (organic methods, crop rotation) for the first five years.

Economic Benefits: This framework transforms cannabis into an agricultural powerhouse, revitalizing rural economies hit by declining traditional crops. With 5% of tax revenue dedicated to industry sustainability (research into green techniques and industrial applications), the act could add \$1-2 billion to Georgia's GDP over a decade through farming exports and jobs. Priority licensing for underserved

communities further promotes equity, with grants for startups, turning a once-criminalized plant into a driver of innovation and environmental stewardship.

4. Use as a Food Product: Integrating Edibles and Infusions Safely

Treating cannabis as a food product, the GCFA legalizes all forms, including edibles, tinctures, and infused goods, without THC restrictions. Commercial products must undergo full-panel safety testing by accredited labs, with child-resistant packaging to prevent appeal to minors—mirroring food safety standards.

This leg allows seamless integration into daily life, such as in beverages or snacks sold at dispensaries or co-located with pharmacies/liquor stores, including online delivery.

Economic Benefits: Edibles and infusions, taxed at 7% (or 5% with sustainability incentives), tap into a high-demand market segment. This could generate significant revenue, with allocations supporting restorative justice (29% of taxes for expungements, equity grants, and reentry programs). By fostering small businesses and prohibiting lawsuit-involved entities from licensing, the act ensures fair competition, potentially creating 10,000+ jobs in manufacturing and processing while reallocating funds to communities harmed by past prohibitions.

Overall Economic Impact and Sensible Policy Rationale

The GCFA's four-legged approach creates a holistic system where medical, adult, agricultural, and food uses reinforce each other, minimizing overlaps and gaps. Economic benefits are baked in through a revenue model projecting hundreds of millions annually—allocated strategically to education (38%), justice (29%), health (19%), rural growth (9%), and sustainability (5%)—while automatic expungements will address past injustices, freeing up resources.

This model exemplifies sensible legislation by balancing freedoms with safeguards (e.g., age limits, impaired driving tests), encouraging innovation, and leveraging cannabis's versatility for prosperity. If adopted, it could position Georgia as a leader in the Southeast, outpacing slower reforms and yielding broad societal gains without the overregulation seen elsewhere. For implementation, ongoing monitoring by the GCA ensures adaptability, including alignment with potential federal changes.