Position: The Epilepsy Foundation supports the Charlotte’s Web Medical Hemp Act of 2014 (H.R. 5226), bipartisan legislation introduced by Representative Scott Perry (PA) which would modify the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) to remove therapeutic hemp (defined as cannabis with less than .3 percent THC) and cannabidiol.

The Epilepsy Foundation is the leading non-profit patient organization providing a voice for over 2.8 million Americans with epilepsy and their families. We are committed to supporting physician-directed care and to exploring and advocating for all potential treatment options, including cannabidiol (CBD).

Epilepsy is a medical condition that produces seizures affecting a variety of mental and physical functions. Approximately 1 in 26 Americans will develop epilepsy at some point in their lifetime. There is no "one size fits all" treatment for epilepsy, and about a third of people living with epilepsy suffer from uncontrolled or intractable seizures, with many more living with significant side-effects, despite available treatments. Uncontrolled seizures can lead to disability, injury, and even death. This is why people living with uncontrolled seizures turn to CBD when all other options have failed.

Medical use of cannabis has been legalized in 23 states and the District of Columbia, and some people living with uncontrolled seizures have reported beneficial effects and reduced seizure activity when using medical cannabis, especially CBD oil. But people living with uncontrolled seizures and in states where CBD is not legal, don't have safe and legal access to this treatment option.

Removing therapeutic hemp from the CSA would pave the way for legally growing hemp, expanding research into the connection between CBD and seizure control, and safe processing and dispensing of CBD. Clinical trials have limitations on the numbers and types of patients they can enroll, making it hard or impossible for families to enroll in CBD trials. Families who have run out of treatment options and cannot be part of a trial would not have to consider splitting up so one parent can move to a state where CBD is legal; breaking the law by bringing CBD across multiple state lines or lying about residency requirements; or take their chances with unregulated products marketed as CBD once hemp is removed from the CSA. This is why we call on Congress to remove therapeutic hemp from the CSA to ensure that access to CBD is safe and reliable.

We urge Representatives to cosponsor the Charlotte’s Web Medical Hemp Act of 2014. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Angela Ostrom at the Epilepsy Foundation at aostrom@efa.org or 301-918-3766.