The start of the new year marked the beginning of a four-year pilot project in Illinois that permits the use of marijuana for medical purposes. Illinois is the second state in the Midwest with such a law and the first in the region where it was initiated by the legislature. Medical marijuana was legalized in Michigan six years ago via a ballot proposal.

Under Illinois HB 1, 22 regulated “cultivation centers” and up to 60 licensed dispensaries can now open in the state. Unlike some states, including Michigan, Illinois will not allow patients or their caregivers to grow marijuana. As of late last year, Michigan law did not specifically authorize medical marijuana dispensaries. And in early 2013, the Michigan Supreme Court ruled that local prosecutors could use the state’s public nuisance law to shut these operations down.

A bill approved late in 2013 by the Michigan House (HB 4271) would allow local governments to decide whether or not to permit the opening of “provisioning centers.” These centers are needed to dispense the drug, legislative supporters say, because the number of medical marijuana patients far exceeds the number of caregivers able to provide for them.