



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

**560 Jefferson Boulevard
Warwick, Rhode Island 02886**

Cannabis Control Commission

Open Meeting Minutes

DATE: March 29, 2024
TIME: 1:00 PM
PLACE: Public Utilities Commission
89 Jefferson Boulevard
Warwick, RI 02886

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Kimberly R. Ahern, Esq.
Commissioner Robert B. Jacquard, Esq.
Commissioner Olayiwola Oduyingbo, Esq.

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Mariana Ormonde, Chief of Legal Services, Cannabis Control Commission
Kelsey McQueeney, Administrative Officer, Cannabis Control Commission
Carla Aveledo, Policy Liaison and Legal Support, Cannabis Control Commission

Chairperson Ahern called the meeting to order at 1:03 pm.

The first item of business was:

Call to Order and introductory remarks from the Chairperson, which included:

- Chair Ahern introduced the presentation of the Medical Marijuana Program Parity report and thanked all staff involved in conducting the study;
- Noted that this study was being presented over the course of two separate open meetings to give members of the public, medical patients and industry professionals the opportunity to comment and provide feedback.

The next item of business was:

Motion to approve the minutes of the open session meeting held on March 15, 2024.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Jacquard and duly seconded by Commissioner Oduyingbo, it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the open session meeting held on March 15, 2024.

The next item of business was:

Review, discussion and potential vote on the Medical Marijuana Program Parity report to be delivered to the Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives and President of the Senate, per R.I. Gen. Laws § 21-28.11-10.4, which included:

- Presentation by Carla Aveledo, Esq., Policy Liaison and Legal Support, Cannabis Control Commission;
- Report on the current tax and license fee structure for medical marijuana sales in Rhode Island;
- Comparison of Rhode Island's medical marijuana tax structure to that of other New England states and Maryland;
- Comparison of the medical marijuana licensing fee structure in Rhode Island to that of other New England states and Maryland;
- Review of current medical and adult use sales trends using data provided by the Office of Cannabis Regulation;
- Presentation of key takeaways, including that medical patient registrations have been declining steadily since introduction of adult use sales, that medical marijuana sales have also seen a downward trend, that authorized purchaser registrations remain stable, and that Rhode Island's tax and licensing fee structures differ from nearby states;
- Note that it is a goal of the Commission to preserve and improve the medical marijuana program going forward.

At the completion of the presentation, a discussion ensued, and questions and comments were posed by the Commissioners, including:

- Whether hybrid cannabis retailers that cultivate their own cannabis have to pay a separate fee for a cultivation license, and whether this was factored into the licensing structure comparison;
- Whether the combined licensing schedules and fees from other states compare to the licensing fees that Rhode Island currently charges;
- Response that the comparison of state licensing schemes is difficult and not exact because no two states' structures are the same.

Upon motion made by Chair Ahern, it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve and submit the Medical Marijuana Program Parity report to the Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives and President of the Senate.

The next item of business was:

Update on data collection and analysis for the study concerning Rhode Island's disproportionately impacted areas, which included:

- An update provided by Mariana Ormonde, Esq., Chief of Legal Services to the Cannabis Control Commission;
- Explanation that the Rhode Island Cannabis Act identifies specific criteria to be used to assess whether an area is a disproportionately impacted area;
- Update that the data related to each criteria has been collected, and that some historical data, going back decades, is still being collected;
- That the data analysis team is reviewing and organizing the collected data to create lists and location maps that will be presented to the Commission at a future meeting.

Discussion ensued, including a question on whether a future social equity applicant may show that they meet the disproportionately impacted area requirement in a way that the Commission's study does not show; counsel responded that it was up to the Commission to determine what the state's disproportionately impacted areas are and what information from applicants would be accepted by the Commission.

Chair Ahern noted that April's meetings will include a presentation on the study being conducted on the moratorium on new cultivator licenses, as required by statute, and that the presentation of the study information will take place over the span of two meetings in the month of April.

The next item of business was:

Public Comment.

One person gave public comment on the following:

- Expressed that public turnout at the Cannabis Advisory Board subcommittee meetings was good;
- Expressed that the Cannabis Advisory Board subcommittees may need multiple meetings to reach votes on the specific questions given by the Commission;
- Expressed the need for new retail stores to be opened.

The next item of business was:

Next Meeting Date: Friday April 12, 2024 at 1:00pm at the Public Utilities Commission, 89 Jefferson Boulevard, Warwick, RI 02889.

Adjournment:

Upon motion made by Commissioner Oduyingbo and duly seconded by Commissioner Jacquard, it was unanimously

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 1:32 pm.