



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES COUNCIL

P. O. Box 1797
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23218-1797

William H. Williams, Jr.
Chair

February 17, 2015

To: The Honorable Terence R. McAuliffe
and
Members, Virginia General Assembly

As Chair of the Substance Abuse Services Council, I am pleased to provide the council's recommendation concerning the legalization of medical marijuana in Virginia. As you are aware, §2.2-2696 of the *Code of Virginia* charges the council with recommending policies about substance abuse and closely related issues within the Commonwealth. The membership of the council includes senators, delegates, representatives of state agencies, and representatives of provider and advocacy organizations appointed by the Governor. Their role is to advise the Governor, the General Assembly, and the Board of the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services about policy issues and to make recommendations to them for implementation or further study.

The council's major focus in 2014 was the study of issues related to marijuana, particularly medical marijuana. Based on the preliminary information reviewed, ***the council recommends that the Governor direct the Substance Abuse Services Council to continue its in-depth study of medical marijuana and of legalization or decriminalization of marijuana and of the social, public safety, legal, economic, and other effects on the Commonwealth and its residents, and to prepare a report of their findings and recommendations by December 1, 2015.***

The Substance Abuse Services Council's 2014 Annual Report ([http://leg2.state.va.us/dls/h&sdocs.nsf/By+Year/RD52015/\\$file/RD5.pdf](http://leg2.state.va.us/dls/h&sdocs.nsf/By+Year/RD52015/$file/RD5.pdf)) details the council's activities during the past year. Council members reviewed and discussed the currently available research on cannabis (marijuana), the medical components and therapeutic uses of marijuana, the health and legal aspects of its medical use, the public health impact of legalizing medical marijuana, other states' experience with legalization, and the impact of legalization on Virginia's communities and on the Commonwealth's prevention and treatment services system. To inform their discussion, council members heard detailed presentations by speakers providing the medical background and effects of marijuana as well as potential concerns for use, and also from presenters speaking in favor of medical marijuana. (Complete PowerPoint presentations are

Letter to the Governor and Members of the General Assembly

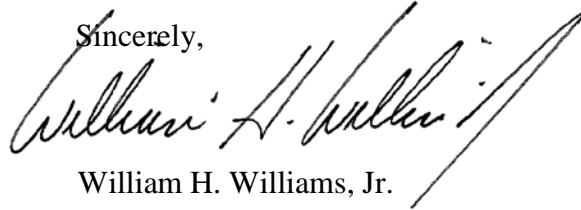
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available at <http://www.dbhds.virginia.gov/about-dbhds/boards-and-councils/substance-abuse-services-council>.)

On behalf of the council, I appreciate the opportunity to provide for your consideration the council's recommendation concerning the legalization of medical marijuana in Virginia.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William H. Williams, Jr.", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

William H. Williams, Jr.

pc: The Honorable William A. Hazel, Jr., M.D., Secretary of Health and Human Resources
The Honorable Anne Holton, Secretary of Education
The Honorable Brian Moran, Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security
Ananda K. Pandurangi, Chair, State Board of Behavioral Health and Developmental
Services
Debra Ferguson, Ph.D., Commissioner, Department of Behavioral Health and
Developmental Services