



**ANNUAL REPORT BY  
THE CANNABIS PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY  
COUNCIL**

December 12, 2022

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## **OVERVIEW**

Section 4.1-603 of the Code of Virginia (Code) established the Cannabis Public Health Advisory Council (CPHAC, or the Advisory Council) as an advisory council to the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority. This report details work of the Advisory Council in fulfilling its purpose of assessing and monitoring public health issues, trends, and impacts related to marijuana and marijuana legalization and making recommendations regarding health warnings, retail marijuana and retail marijuana products safety and product composition, and public health awareness, programming, and related needs. The report covers CPHAC activity from January 1, 2022, through December 1, 2022.

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### **STATUTORY DUTIES OF THE CPHAC**

As noted above, the CPHAC is established as an advisory council to the Cannabis Control Authority Board of Directors. Specifically, the Advisory Council shall have the following duties, as described in § 4.1-603:

1. Review multi-agency efforts to support collaboration and a unified approach on public health responses related to marijuana and marijuana legalization in the Commonwealth and to develop recommendations, as necessary.
  2. Monitor changes in drug use data related to marijuana and marijuana legalization in Virginia and the science and medical information relevant to the potential health risks associated with such drug use and make appropriate recommendations to the Department of Health and the Board.
  3. Submit an annual report to the Governor and General Assembly for publication as a report document as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports.
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## MEMBERS OF THE CPHAC

As stated in § 4.1-603, the Advisory Council shall consist of a total membership of 21 members: 14 non-legislative citizen members and seven ex officio members.

Four non-legislative members of the Advisory Council shall be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules: one shall represent the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth, one shall represent the Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, one shall represent the Medical Society of Virginia, and one shall represent the Virginia Pharmacists Association.

Six non-legislative members shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates: one shall be a representative of a community services board, one shall be a person with expertise in substance use disorder treatment and recovery, one shall be a person with expertise in substance use disorder prevention, one shall be a person with experiences in disability rights advocacy, one shall be a person with experience in veterans' health care, and one shall be a person with a social or health equity background.

Four non-legislative members shall be appointed by the Governor, subject to confirmation by the General Assembly: one shall represent a local health district, one shall be an academic researcher knowledgeable about cannabis, one shall be a part of the cannabis industry, and one shall be a registered medical cannabis patient.

After initial staggering of terms, non-legislative members shall be appointed for a four-year term.

Ex officio members shall include the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, the Commissioner of Health, the Commissioner of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, the Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Director of the Department of Health Professions, the Director of the Department of Forensic Science, and the Chief Executive Officer of the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority, or their designees. Ex officio members shall serve terms that coincide with their terms of office.

As of December 12, 2022, the CPHAC consists of the following members:<sup>1</sup>

- Secretary of Health and Human Resources, John Littel, Chair of the Council
- Ngiste Abebe, Vice Chair
- Karin Addison
- Christina Barrille
- Kyzwana Caves
- John Whyte
- Jerome Barber

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<sup>1</sup> Biographies for each of the CPHAC members can be found in Appendix A of this Report.

- Teresa Elder
- Michael Krawitz
- Michael Gillette
- Jimmy Christmas
- Colin M. Greene, State Health Commissioner, Virginia Department of Health
- Nelson Smith, Commissioner of the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services
- Joseph Guthrie, Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Sciences
- Arne Owens, Director of the Virginia Department of Health Professions
- Linda C. Jackson, Director of the Virginia Department of Forensic Science

There are two vacancies on the CPHAC: (1) a non-legislative citizen member representing a community services board (to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates) and (2) the Chief Executive Officer of the Cannabis Control Authority (to be appointed by the Governor).

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## **ACTIVITY OF THE CPHAC: MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL**

The CPHAC is statutorily required to meet at least two times each year and shall meet at the call of the chairman or whenever the majority of the members request. These meetings allow the CPHAC to conduct its business and allow for comment from members of the public who choose to attend, including virtually when technology permits. The Advisory Council met in September 2022.<sup>2</sup> A second meeting is planned for December 12, 2022 and will take place after the creation of this report.<sup>3</sup> Council meetings have and will feature outside speakers with a variety of expertise in public health, cannabis, and data to allow the CPHAC to continue to build its expertise on cannabis and health-related issues.

At its meeting on September 12, 2022, the CPHAC learned about some key public health initiatives and concerns. David May from the Division of Legislative Services highlighted legislative updates that occurred during the 2022 General Assembly. Brianna Bonat and Matthew Prentice from the Cannabis Control Authority presented several public health priorities of the CCA. The executive director of the Virginia Board of Pharmacy, Caroline Juran, provided an update on the state's medical cannabis program. Nicole Gore with Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services discussed the education and prevention work of community services boards and the need for preventative measures, such as compliance checks, to ensure cannabis products, including unregulated products, are not sold to youth. Marge White with Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth highlighted the Foundation's marketing campaign, which consisted of providing science and information on the impact of marijuana use on the developing brain to youth. Lastly, Dr. Christopher Holstege provided the group with a background on the chemical differences between CBD, Delta 9 THC, and Delta 8 THC and discussed the rise in Blue Ridge Poison Center calls.

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<sup>2</sup> Draft minutes for the September 2022 CPHAC meeting can be found in Appendix B of this Report.

<sup>3</sup> A draft agenda for the December 2022 CPHAC meeting can be found in Appendix C of this Report.

## CONCLUSION

The CPHAC plays an important role in monitoring key public health data, trends, and considerations with regards to cannabis. The CPHAC will have a direct involvement in forming recommendations for the benefit of public health as the CCA Board exercises its powers and duties, including the promulgation of regulations. The CPHAC looks forward to collaborating with the Governor, General Assembly, CCA and other state agencies, public health experts, and the public to ensure that public health remains a top priority in the regulation of cannabis.

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## **APPENDIX A: BIOGRAPHIES OF CPHAC MEMBERS**

Secretary of Health and Human Resources, John Littel, serves as Chair of the Council. He brings 30 years of public policy experience to the Administration, including developing private sector solutions for Medicaid, advocating for independent living for seniors and people with disabilities, and leading mental health and substance use disorder programs. Twenty-six years ago, Secretary Littel was the Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Resources. Since then, the Secretary has held senior roles at Magellan Health, Anthem, and Amerigroup, as well as at both the federal and state government levels. He has taught government, politics and communications at the graduate level, and has also served as a member of the William & Mary Public Policy Board of Advisors. Secretary Littel earned his bachelor's degree in Philosophy and Political Science from the University of Scranton and J.D. from The Columbus School of Law at Catholic University.

Ms. Ngiste Abebe\* serves as Vice Chair of the Council. Ms. Abebe is Vice President of Public Policy at Columbia Care, one of the nation's leading medical cannabis companies. She serves as the President of the New York Medical Cannabis Industry Association and on the board of the District of Columbia Cannabis Trade Association. Prior to that, she was co-founder of Undaunted Ventures, a political consulting firm which specializes in innovative narrative, training, and leadership coaching services, and which grew out of her work training progressive organizations and working on campaigns across Virginia. She is the co-founder and co-director emerita of New Leaders Council Virginia, a progressive leadership institute. Ms. Abebe holds a BA in Public Policy from the University of Chicago and a Master's in Public Policy and Management from Carnegie Mellon University.

Ms. Karin Addison serves as the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth Board Chair. She is also the Director of State Affairs at Troutman Pepper Strategies. Ms. Addison has 19 years of experience lobbying the Virginia General Assembly and Executive Branch offices. She has an array of expertise at the state level in the areas of healthcare, human services, procurement, and appropriations. Ms. Addison currently assists clients with understanding and identifying health and human service-related procurement opportunities and understanding the impact of Medicaid program changes.

Ms. Christina Barrille has served as the Executive Director of the Virginia Pharmacists Association since February 2018. She received her B.A. in Government with a Business Management Certificate at Sweet Briar College. Prior to the Virginia Pharmacists Association, Ms. Barrille worked at the Department of Military Affairs, serving as a legislative policy analyst and later on as the Director of Legislation and Policy.

Dr. Kyzwana Caves represents the Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Dr. Caves moved to the Tidewater area after completing her fellowship in adolescent medicine at Children's National Medical Center in Washington, DC. Dr. Caves has specialized expertise in managing diverse issues unique to the adolescent population; this includes being credentialed as an HIV Specialist by the American Academy of HIV Medicine. She enjoys working as a multidisciplinary team member to offer optimal care for each of her patients and their families.

Dr. John Whyte represents the Medical Society of Virginia. Dr. John Whyte is an internal medicine physician in Washington D.C. and corporate executive with a unique combination of government and private sector work that provides him with an exceptional perspective on wellness, clinical trials, information technology, innovation, and health care services.

Rev. Dr. Jerome Barber has a background in social and health equity. Rev. Barber is the Senior Pastor of Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Temple a strong growing congregation in Hampton, Virginia and he is the Executive Director, President and Co-Founder of Six House, Inc., a faith-based community organization. He earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in Biology from Hampton Institute (Hampton VA) in 1981, graduating with high honors as a Distinguished Military Graduate and commissioned as 2nd Lieutenant in the US Army. He was conferred as a Doctor of Divinity by the Eastern Theological Seminary during its 2001 commencement ceremony. Since July 2000, he has mobilized teams from the United States of pastors, medical professionals, educators and youth to conduct revivals, crusades, bible seminars, youth and women's conferences, training workshops, and medical clinics throughout the Nairobi area of Kenya, West Africa and in Salvador, Brazil.

Ms. Teresa Elder has experience in disability rights advocacy. Ms. Elder is from Springfield, VA and has a son who suffers from epilepsy. She has spoken in front of the Senate Education and Health committee in support of bills that advocate for disability rights, such as SB1235, which allowed the possession of oils derived from marijuana to medicate epilepsy.

Mr. Michael Krawitz is experienced in veterans' health care. He is a U.S. Air Force veteran, Executive Director of the non-profit Veterans for Medical Cannabis Access, researcher on the history of medical cannabis, and international advocate for Cannabis policy reform with FAAAT think & do tank (non-profit).

Dr. Michael Gillette is experienced in substance use disorder prevention. Dr. Gillette is an ethicist and president of Bioethical Services of Virginia, Inc., a consulting business that provides ethics case consultation, policy development and review, and educational services to clients throughout the country and internationally. He graduated magna cum laude from Brandeis University, with majors in philosophy and classical Greek, where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. He earned his master's and Ph.D. in philosophy at Brown University. Dr. Gillette has been working with the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services for over thirty years, engaging both with inpatient facilities and community-based providers around numerous issues, including ethical issues in the provision of substance use disorder services. He was elected three times to City Council in Lynchburg, Virginia and served two terms as Mayor of the City.

Mr. Jimmy Christmas has expertise in substance use disorder treatment and recovery. Mr. Christmas is an accomplished leader with experience in program development, clinical services, state and federal compliance, risk management, strategic planning, operations, talent management, and fiscal management. He is currently the Founder and CEO of a family of behavioral health organizations that include River City Comprehensive Counseling Services, River City Integrative Counseling, and Staunton Treatment Center. Founded in 2008, River City's programs and services include Crisis Stabilization, Intensive In-Home Services, Mental Health Skill Building, and Veteran's Employment Program. Mr. Christmas is a licensed clinical social worker and certified substance abuse counselor. He served as adjunct faculty and field instructor for VCU's School of Social Work for 15 years.

Dr. Colin M. Greene MD, MPH, was appointed as the State Health Commissioner, Virginia Department of Health, effective 11 April 2022. Prior to this, he was appointed as the Acting State Health Commissioner effective 15 January 2022. Dr. Greene is a family doctor who spent his youth on eastern Long Island and in central Florida, graduated from Johns Hopkins (Bachelor's) and Temple University (MD), and trained in Family Medicine in Lynchburg, finishing in 1987. He then served 30

years in the US Army, with assignments in clinical full-service family medicine (including delivering babies), family medicine residency faculty, primary care director, chief medical officer of hospitals in North Carolina and Iraq, and director of the premier biomedical research institute in the Department of Defense, the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. In 2006, Dr. Greene earned an MPH from the University of Washington and went on to work for the Virginia Department of Health in July of 2017 as Director of the Lord Fairfax Health District.

Commissioner Nelson Smith comes to the Youngkin administration with a wide variety of experience. He will bring to his role of Commissioner of the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services leadership as a CEO at several hospitals, as a US Army Special Forces Combat Dive Team Leader, and most recently, his experience overseeing Tucker Pavilion at Chippenham Hospital. His responsibilities included coordinating and implementing initiatives that improve access, quality, and efficiency in both the inpatient and outpatient settings. Commissioner Smith has a passion for team building and a proven track record of employee engagement and empowerment.

Commissioner Joseph Guthrie serves as lead of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Sciences. Commissioner Guthrie is a sixth generation Virginia farmer. He owns and operates a beef cattle and hay farm in Pulaski County on farmland that has been in his family since 1795. Since 2007, he served as a Senior Instructor at Virginia Tech and taught courses in business management, finance, communications, and leadership in the Agricultural Technology Program. Prior to his appointment, he served the residents of Pulaski County on the Board of Supervisors since 2015 and was elected Board Chair in 2020 and 2021. He was also elected to a four-year term on the Pulaski County School Board in 2011. Commissioner Guthrie has served as the president of Virginia Tech's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Faculty Association, president of Pulaski County Farm Bureau, and president of the Virginia Cattlemen's Association. He was appointed by USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack to the National Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board and was appointed by former Governor Bob McDonnell to the Virginia Cattle Industry Board.

Director Arne Owens was appointed to serve as Director of the Department of Health Professions in November 2022. Mr. Owens previously served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation in the Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and, prior to that, as Deputy Assistant Secretary with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) at HHS. He has also served on the staff of the U.S. Senate as Health Care Policy Advisor for former Senator Bob Corker, Global Health Policy Advisor for the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, and Health Care Policy Advisor for the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship and its chairman, former Senator David Vitter. Mr. Owens is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and holds a Master of Science Degree from the University of Southern California.

Director Linda C. Jackson was initially appointed as the Director of the Virginia Department of Forensic Science by Governor McDonnell on February 25, 2013, to fulfill an unexpired term. She was re-appointed by Governor McAuliffe effective December 26, 2017, for a six-year term. Ms. Jackson has a B.S. degree in Chemistry from Wake Forest University and an M.S. in Chemistry from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. As Director, she has worked to increase laboratory transparency by making all Breath Alcohol instrument records and test results available online and offering scientific training to criminal attorneys and judges. She has worked with the Department of Criminal Justice Services to publish annual seized drug statistics for use by Virginia public safety and public health agencies.

Dr. Larry Keen\* is an associate professor at Virginia State University. Dr. Keen received his B.A. in Psychology from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. He received both his M.S. and Ph.D. in Neuropsychology & Personality from Howard University. Dr. Keen's research interests include examining the psychoneuroimmunological influences of cannabis use and neurocognitive performance in community-based and young adult samples. Dr. Keen also has research interests in substance use patterns in young adults and their associations with psychological and autonomic nervous system markers.

Dr. Cynthia Morrow\*, MD, MPH is the Director of Virginia Department of Health's Roanoke City and Alleghany health districts. She graduated from Tufts University in 1992. She is an internal medicine physician in Roanoke, VA and has over 30 years of experience in the medical field. She is also an assistant professor at Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine.

Mr. Marcus Treiber\* is the Chief Executive Officer of EMT Holdings LLC and a registered medical cannabis patient. Marcus is a member of the U.S. Marine Corp. EMT Holdings is a service-disabled, veteran-owned small business and HUBZone business focused on providing customers with highly qualified and motivated support and solutions.

\*Denotes Governor Appointee

**APPENDIX B: DRAFT MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 12, 2022 CPHAC MEETING**



**Cannabis Control Authority  
Cannabis Public Health Advisory Council Meeting  
As Required by 2021 Acts of Assembly, Chapter 551  
DRAFT MINUTES**

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**September 12, 2022  
2:00 PM - 5:00 PM  
East Readings Room  
Patrick Henry Building  
1111 E. Broad St.  
Richmond, VA 23219  
Richmond, VA**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** John Littel, Chair  
Ngiste Abebe, Vice Chair  
Karin Addison  
Christina Barrille  
Dr. John Whyte  
Jimmy Christmas  
Michael Krawitz  
Colin Greene  
Nelson Smith  
Joseph Guthrie  
Dr. David E. Brown  
Linda Jackson  
Marcus Trieber

**PRESENTERS:** David May, Division of Legislative Services  
Brianna Bonat, Cannabis Control Authority  
Matthew Prentice, Cannabis Control Authority  
Caroline Juran, Board of Pharmacy  
Nicole Gore, Department of Behavioral Health and  
Developmental Services  
Marge White, Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth  
Dr. Christopher Holstege, Blue Ridge Poison Center

**1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS & ROLL CALL**

Secretary Littel called the meeting to order at 2:04 PM.

## **2. RECAP OF 2022 LEGISLATION**

David May from the Division of Legislative Services highlighted legislative updates that occurred during the 2022 General Assembly. He discussed what remains legal regarding cannabis use and plant growth, as well as the upcoming transition of the medical cannabis program from Board of Pharmacy to the Cannabis Control Authority.

## **3. VIRGINIA CANNABIS CONTROL AUTHORITY – CURRENT AND FUTURE INITIATIVES**

Brianna Bonat and Matthew Prentice presented several public health priorities of the Authority. The CCA plans to assume oversight of the medical cannabis program starting in FY24. The team has also begun to create several resources, including fact sheets and informational documents. The topics of these resources include health effects of cannabis use, “responsible” consumption, the difference between THC and CBD, the difference between marijuana and hemp, and more. A few preliminary results were shared from the CCA’s safe driving campaign survey. Although data is unweighted, numbers show a great need for a statewide campaign focused on cannabis use and safe driving.

## **4. UPDATE ON MEDICAL CANNABIS PROGRAM**

The executive director of the VA Board of Pharmacy, Caroline Juran, provided an update on the state’s medical cannabis program. After providing a brief legislative history, Caroline provided current data regarding the program. The medical cannabis program has over 45,000 registered patients and monthly dispensations increased almost eight times between January 2021 and August 2022.

## **5. UPDATES ON YOUTH CANNABIS USE PREVENTION & EDUCATION EFFORTS**

Nicole Gore with VA Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services discussed the education and prevention work of community services boards and need for preventative measures, such as compliance checks, to ensure cannabis products, including unregulated products, are not sold to youth. Marge White with Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth highlighted the Foundation’s marketing campaign, which consisted of providing science and information on the impact of marijuana use on the developing brain to youth. The campaign, UnfazedVA, included a website, Instagram posts, and TikTok videos, all of which produced engagement results that were higher than expected.

## **6. BLUE RIDGE POISON CENTER – CANNABIS RELATED CALLS AND CHALLENGES**

Dr. Christopher Holstege provided the group with a background on the chemical differences between CBD, Delta 9 THC, and Delta 8 THC. He then presented a couple case studies and data from the University of Virginia Health’s Blue Ridge Poison Center, showing the rise in THC exposures since 2018. Exposure to unregulated Delta 8 THC products is a main cause for the increase in poison control center calls.

## **7. NEXT STEPS**

The Advisory Council confirmed it will next meet on December 6<sup>th</sup> at 9am.

## **8. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no public comments at this meeting.

## **9. ADJOURNMENT**

The Council adjourned at 4:33pm.

**APPENDIX C: DRAFT AGENDA FROM DECEMBER 12, 2022 CPHAC MEETING**



**Cannabis Public Health Advisory Council**  
As Required by 2021 Acts of Assembly, Chapter 551  
**December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022**  
**2:00 PM – 5:00 PM**

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**East Reading Room – Patrick Henry Building**  
**AGENDA**

1. **Introductory Remarks & Roll Call**  
*Office of the Secretary of Health and Human Resources*
2. **Determination of Quorum**  
*Office of the Secretary of Health and Human Resources*
3. **Electronic Participation Policy**  
*Eric Lansing, Office of the Attorney General*
4. **Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes**  
*Office of the Secretary of Health and Human Resources*
5. **Approval of Annual Report**  
*Office of the Secretary of Health and Human Resources*
6. **Presentation: Virginia Cannabis Control Authority Updates**  
*Brianna Bonat, Virginia Cannabis Control Authority*
7. **Presentation: The Food and Drink Law Related to Industrial Hemp Extracts**  
*David McGreevy, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services*
8. **Presentation: Impaired Driving: Virginia Department of Forensic Science Perspective**  
*James Hutchings, Ph.D., Virginia Department of Forensic Science*
9. **Council Organization Structure**  
*Office of the Secretary of Health and Human Resources*
  - a. Vote on Vice Chairperson (required) & Secretary (recommended)
10. **Next Steps**  
*Office of the Secretary of Health and Human Resources*
11. **Public Comment**