



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

November 3, 2025

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OVERVIEW

Section 4.1-603 of the Code of Virginia (Code) established the Cannabis Public Health Advisory Council (CPHAC, or Advisory Council) as an advisory council to the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority (CCA). This report details the work of the Advisory Council in fulfilling its statutory purpose “to assess and monitor public health issues, trends, and impacts related to marijuana and marijuana legalization and make recommendations regarding health warnings, retail marijuana and retail marijuana products safety and product composition, and public health awareness, programming, and related resource needs.” Va. Code § 4.1-603. This report covers CPHAC activity from July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025.

STATUTORY DUTIES OF THE CPHAC

As noted above, the Cannabis Control Act established the CPHAC as an advisory council to the Cannabis Control Authority Board of Directors (the Board). Specifically, the Advisory Council shall have the following duties, as described in Virginia Code section 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.

MEMBERS OF THE CPHAC

As stated in Virginia Code section 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.¹

The Senate Committee on Rules shall appoint four non-legislative members of the Advisory Council:

- 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.

The Speaker of the House of Delegates shall appoint six non-legislative members:

- 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 experience 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.

The Governor shall appoint four non-legislative members, 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.

The ex officio members of the Advisory Council 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;

¹ After initial staggering of terms, non-legislative members shall be appointed for a four-year term.

- the Director of the Department of Forensic Science; and
- the Chief Executive Officer of the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority, or their designees.²

As of June 30, 2025, the CPHAC consists of the following members:³

- Janet Kelly, Secretary of Health and Human Resources, Chair
- Ngiste Abebe, Vice Chair
- Joseph Guthrie, Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Sciences
- Linda C. Jackson, Director of the Virginia Department of Forensic Science
- Arne Owens, Director of the Virginia Department of Health Professions
- Jamie Patten, Acting Head and Chief Administrative Officer, Virginia Cannabis Control Authority
- Dr. Karen Shelton, State Health Commissioner, Virginia Department of Health
- Nelson Smith, Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services
- Dr. Larry Keen
- Michael Krawitz
- Rev. Dr. Jerome Barber
- Teresa Elder
- LeNelle Mozell
- Melissa Ackley
- Karin Addison
- Dr. Michael Gillette

During fiscal year 2025, there were three vacancies on the Advisory Council:

- A representative of the Virginia Pharmacists Association (to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules);
- A representative of the Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (to be

² Ex officio members shall serve terms that coincide with their terms of office, and they can send designees to attend CPHAC meetings.

³ Biographies of each CPHAC member can be found in Appendix A of this Report.

- appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules); and
- A representative from the Medical Society of Virginia (to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules).

At the time of this report, there are an additional two vacancies on the Advisory Council due to appointments that expired on June 30, 2025:

- A representative of a local health district (to be appointed by the Governor); and
- A registered medical cannabis patient (to be appointed by the Governor).

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETINGS

Virginia Code requires the CPHAC to meet at least two times each year. The Advisory Council also “shall meet at the call of the chairman or whenever the majority of the members so request.” Va. Code § 4.1-603(B). These meetings allow the CPHAC to conduct its business and allow for comments from members of the public. Advisory Council meetings often feature outside speakers with varied expertise in public health, cannabis, and data.

The Advisory Council met virtually on November 18, 2024.⁴ During this meeting, the Council voted on and approved the CPHAC 2024 Annual Report. The Council heard a presentation from Ms. Hanna Jones and Mr. Isaac Wright and his team from the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority (CCA). Ms. Jones presented key findings from the CCA’s Medical Cannabis Program Patient Satisfaction Survey, including patient satisfaction and potential improvements for the program. Mr. Wright and his team provided the Council with updates on recent changes to Virginia’s Medical Cannabis Program, covering current data and technology initiatives, as well as program safety and compliance protocols.

The Advisory Council met in-person on May 12, 2025.⁵ The Council voted to re-appoint member Ngiste Abebe as the vice chair. Director Colleen Hughes from the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services presented key findings from the 2024 Virginia Young Adult Survey, including decreases in lifetime cannabis use since the last survey and low perception of harm from respondents. Dr. Aron Lichtman, professor and researcher from Virginia Commonwealth University’s Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology, provided the Council with an overview of cannabis pharmacology. Ms. Hanna Jones from the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority presented on key findings from the CCA’s Medical Cannabis Program Practitioner Survey, reporting practitioner satisfaction and outlining potential improvements for the program.

⁴ Approved minutes for the November 18, 2024, CPHAC meeting can be found in Appendix B of this Report.

⁵ Draft minutes for the May 12, 2025, CPHAC meeting can be found in Appendix C of this Report.

CONCLUSION

The Advisory Council plays an important role in monitoring key public health data, trends, and considerations related to cannabis. The CPHAC looks forward to continuing collaboration with the Governor, General Assembly, CCA and other state agencies, public health experts, and the public to ensure public health remains a top priority in the regulation of cannabis.

APPENDIX A: BIOGRAPHIES OF CPHAC MEMBERS

Secretary of Health and Human Resources, Janet V. Kelly, serves as Chair of the Council. As Governor Youngkin's Senior Advisor for Children and Families, she led the Safe and Sound Task Force significantly reducing the number of displaced children in foster care and the Prompt Placement Task Force which increased access to state psychiatric hospitals. She was also a leading force behind the recently signed kinship care legislation, the First Lady's *It Only Takes One* fentanyl awareness initiative, and the Governor's transformational behavioral health plan, *Right Help, Right Now*. Secretary Kelly serves as Co-Chair of the *Reclaiming Childhood Task Force*, created by Governor Youngkin via Executive Order 43, which empowers parents to improve youth mental health by promoting responsible screen use. From 2010-2014, Secretary Kelly served as Secretary of the Commonwealth in the McDonnell Administration. Because of her family's personal adoption journey, the Kellys remain staunch advocates for children, families, and workers in the child welfare system.

Ms. Ngiste Abebe* is an experienced cannabis policy expert. She currently serves as the Vice Chair of Virginia's Cannabis Public Health Advisory Council. Previously, she was Vice President of Public Policy at Columbia Care, a publicly traded national cannabis company, President of the New York Medical Cannabis Industry Association, and in the executive leadership for cannabis associations in DC, Illinois, and Delaware. Before entering cannabis policy, Ms. Abebe was a founding partner in Undaunted Ventures, a political consulting firm which specializes in innovative narrative, training, and leadership coaching services. Ms. Abebe holds a B.A. in Public Policy from the University of Chicago and a Masters in Public Policy and Management from Carnegie Mellon University.

Commissioner Joseph Guthrie serves as lead of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Sciences. Commissioner Guthrie is a sixth generation Virginia farmer. 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 United State Department of Agriculture 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. Commissioner Guthrie earned a B.S. degree in Agricultural Economics from Virginia Tech. He earned a master's degree in 1991 in Agricultural Economics and International Trade from Massey University in New Zealand, where he studied as a Fulbright Scholar. In 2007, he was awarded the Eisenhower Fellowship in Agriculture to research international trade of beef from Australia and New Zealand.

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 and was re-appointed in 2017 by Governor McAuliffe. She was re-appointed by Governor Youngkin effective January 15, 2024 for a six-year term. She began her career with the Department in 1995 as a Controlled Substances Examiner and then was promoted to Mass Spectrometer Operator, Section Supervisor, Controlled Substances Section Chief and Chemistry Program Manager before assuming her current position. As Director, she has worked to increase laboratory transparency by making all Breath Alcohol instrument records and test results available online, offering scientific training to criminal attorneys and judges, and creating a public dashboard for case statistics. 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. She 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.

Director Arne Owens serves as Department of Health Professions' (DHP) Director after being appointed by Governor Glenn Youngkin in November 2022. He 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. Director Owens 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. He previously served as Chief Deputy Director of DHP during the McDonnell Administration. Prior to that, Director Owens served in HHS during the Bush Administration as Senior Advisor to the Administrator, SAMHSA, and as Director of Public Affairs in the Administration for Children and Families. In addition, he served earlier in Virginia state government in the Gilmore Administration as Deputy Commissioner, Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services. Until 1997, Director Owens was a career Army officer, retiring as a lieutenant colonel after serving in a variety of executive and staff assignments throughout the world. He completed his military service with the Office of the Secretary of Defense at The Pentagon. Director Owens is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and has a Master of Science Degree from the University of Southern California.

Jamie Patten is an accomplished public servant whose more than two-decade career includes several leadership roles spanning across several Virginia agencies. Previously, she was at the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) as the Deputy Director of Administration and Finance. She also served on DJJ's Future Planning Group, which addressed the agency's most pressing administrative challenges. Ms. Patten received her Master of Business Administration and Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Longwood University. She is also a graduate of the Virginia Executive Institute and the Virginia Public Safety Leadership Institute.

Dr. Karen Shelton was named state health commissioner effective May 1, 2023, by Governor Glenn Youngkin. Dr. Shelton brings to the position a wealth of experience in public health operations and policy, health care management, and in caring for patients in the public health and private health care sectors. Dr. Shelton, a board-certified obstetrician and gynecologist, treated patients in Bristol for nearly 20 years before turning her focus to public health. Dr. Shelton first joined the Virginia Department of Health in 2016 to lead the Mount Rogers Health District in Southwestern Virginia. As health district director, she led the health district during the opioid overdose crisis and through the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Shelton also served as acting director for the LENOWISCO and Cumberland Plateau health districts from January to August of 2021. Dr. Shelton accepted a position with Ballad Health in 2021 as vice president and chief medical officer for Bristol Regional Medical Center and Smyth County Community Hospital. Dr. Shelton received her undergraduate education at Wake Forest University, and her Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Virginia School of Medicine. She completed her obstetrics and gynecology residency at Eastern Virginia Medical School.

Commissioner Nelson Smith was appointed by Governor Glenn Youngkin in 2022 to be the commissioner of the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services

(DBHDS). Before joining the private sector, Commissioner Smith served in the U.S. Army's 5th Special Forces Group, where he was recognized with numerous awards for his exceptional leadership and bravery. He received the Purple Heart, four Bronze Star Medals, including one with the "V" device for Valor, and the Green Beret. After retiring from the military, he pursued an MBA from Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University and transitioned to a career in behavioral healthcare administration. During his time at DBHDS, Commissioner Smith has prioritized thoughtful and intentional planning by developing and implementing the DBHDS Strategic Plan, with nine unique objectives, in concurrence with Governor Youngkin's *Right Help, Right Now* plan to transform the behavioral health care system.

Dr. Larry Keen* is an associate professor at Virginia State University. Dr. Keen's research interests include examining the psychoneuroimmunological influences of cannabis use and neurocognitive performance in community-based and young adult samples. He also has research interests in substance use patterns in young adults and their associations with psychological and autonomic nervous system markers. 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.

Michael Krawitz is a disabled United States Air Force Veteran who served from 1981 to 1986. He attended college at Virginia Tech for computer engineering but left due to his medical disability. Mr. Krawitz began his advocacy work after college, and in 1997, he was part of a small team of activists that protected Virginia's longstanding medical marijuana law from being repealed. Since 1998, Mr. Krawitz has been involved in the international field of non-governmental organization (NGO) drug policy work and was a key player in the Beyond 2008 United Nations (UN) NGO drug summit. Mr. Krawitz serves as Executive Director of Veterans for Medical Cannabis Access (VMCA), as well as other board and advisory roles. Leading VMCA, Mr. Krawitz successfully negotiated the first ever VA medical cannabis policy in 2010. Since then, he has overseen the 2019 World Health Organization's and UN's review processes on cannabis scheduling. Mr. Krawitz continues his international advocacy work with the nonprofit Forum Drugs Mediterranean.

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. 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 Salvador, Brazil. 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.

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.

LeNelle Mozell is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker who has been practicing in the social services field for more than 30 years. For nine years, she worked with children with severe emotional and

behavioral problems in substantially separate school and short-term residential settings. Ms. Mozell practiced with substance abuse clients for four years post-graduation while also doing private practice work with children. In 2007, she began working as a Homeless Services Shelter Director in Arlington, VA and transitioned to the Substance Abuse Program Director co-located within the same facility. Ms. Mozell serves on the Virginia Association of Community Services Board, Inc. as co-chair of their Substance Use Disorders Services Council. She continues her work in private practice part-time while maintaining her role as Behavioral Health Program Manager at Prince William County. Ms. Mozell received her B.A. in Psychology at Duke University and her Master of Social Work from Simmons University.

Melissa Ackley, Prevention Services Manager at Chesterfield Mental Health Support Services, has expertise in substance use disorder treatment and recovery. She is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with over 25 years of experience working in the areas of substance abuse prevention, suicide awareness & prevention, mental health promotion, domestic violence, & parent education. Ms. Ackley is co-chair of the Chesterfield Suicide Awareness and Prevention Coalition and the Virginia Association of Community Services Board, Inc. of its Prevention Services Council. She received her B.A. in Psychology from the University of Virginia and her Master's in Social Work from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Karin Addison serves as the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth Board Chair. She has served on numerous boards and commissions and is regularly invited to serve as a resource on legislative and executive workgroups. Ms. Addison works for Troutman Pepper Strategies as the Director of State Affairs. Ms. Addison has 23 years of experience lobbying the Virginia General Assembly and Executive Branch offices. She currently assists Troutman Pepper Strategies clients with understanding and identifying health and human service-related procurement opportunities and understanding the impact of Medicaid program changes. Prior to joining Troutman Pepper Strategies, she worked as the Virginia lead for Humana Corporate Affairs. She also served as Deputy Secretary for Children's Health and Education under Governor McDonnell advising both Secretary of Health and Human Resources Bill Hazel and Secretary of Education Laura Fornash. Ms. Addison received her B.A. in Government from William and Mary.

Dr. Michael Gillette has expertise in substance use disorder prevention. Dr. Gillette is an ethics expert who has presented numerous keynotes and workshops nationally and internationally for over 25 years. He contracts with dozens of healthcare organizations and other agencies to provide ethics case consultations and policy work. Dr. Gillette established Bioethical Services of Virginia, Inc., which provides applied ethics programs and services, including educational programming, case consultation, and policy development and review. He has taught at colleges and universities, published articles in the field of clinical ethics and has received several teaching awards. He was elected three times to the City Council in Lynchburg, Virginia, and served two terms as Mayor. Dr. Gillette received a B.A. in Philosophy and classical Greek from Brandeis University. He received his Master's and Ph.D. in Philosophy from Brown University.

*Denotes Governor Appointee

APPENDIX B: APPROVED MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 18, 2024, CPHAC MEETING



**Cannabis Control Authority
Cannabis Public Health Advisory Council Meeting
As Required by 2021 Acts of Assembly, Chapter 551
November 18, 2024**

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Virtual – ZOOM Meeting
MEETING MINUTES**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Craig Markva (on behalf of Secretary Janet V. Kelly, Chair)
Ngiste Abebe, Vice Chair
Michael Krawitz
Dr. Michael Gillette
Christopher Lindsay (on behalf of Dr. Karen Shelton)
Dr. Larry Keen
Shawn Casey (on behalf of Jeremy Preiss)
Melissa K. Ackley
LeNelle M. Mozell
James Jenkins (on behalf of Arne Owens)
Nikeya Thomas (on behalf of Joseph Guthrie)
Dr. Cynthia Morrow
Dr. John Whyte
Rev. Dr. Jerome Barber
Dr. Kyzwana Caves

LEGAL COUNSEL: James Flaherty, Office of the Attorney General

PRESENTERS: Hanna Jones, Cannabis Control Authority
Isaac Wright, Cannabis Control Authority
Emmy Cohen, Cannabis Control Authority
Zachary Smith, Cannabis Control Authority

1. Introductory Remarks & Roll Call

Mr. Markva called the meeting to order at 2:04 PM.

2. Determination of Quorum

Mr. Markva determined that, with 15 members present, the Advisory Council had a quorum.

3. Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes

Upon motion by Ms. Casey, and duly seconded by Ms. Abebe, Council members voted to approve the draft minutes from the Advisory Council meeting on July 15, 2024.

4. Vote to Approve the Electronic Meeting Policy

Ms. Casey stated that there was no need to re-vote on the approval of the Electronic Meeting Policy since Council Members voted to approve it at the July 15, 2024, meeting. All members of CPHAC should now have a copy of the approved Electronic Meeting Policy document.

5. Vote to Approve the Annual Report

Upon motion by Dr. Gillette, and duly seconded by Dr. Caves, Council members unanimously approved the draft CPHAC Annual Report.

6. Presentation: Medical Cannabis Program Patient Satisfaction Survey Results

Ms. Jones presented a summary of the Cannabis Control Authority's (CCA) Medical Cannabis Program (MCP) Patient Satisfaction Survey. The survey, conducted online from June 25, 2024, through August 9, 2024, assessed patient perspectives on the operation of Virginia's MCP. The survey received over 800 responses and captured patterns of cannabis use, the process of obtaining a written certification, purchase behaviors, dispensary experiences, and overall satisfaction with the MCP.

Ms. Jones reported that MCP patients reported overall satisfaction with the program and 82% of patients would recommend the program to a family member or friend. Based on patient feedback, Ms. Jones offered suggestions for approaches to enhance the MCP: (1) offering training and education to healthcare providers; (2) lowering the cost and increasing the variety of medical cannabis products; (3) requiring pharmacists to provide first-visit consultations to patients at medical cannabis dispensaries; (4) expanding patient and dispensary education; (5) conducting a survey of medical cannabis practitioners; and (6) determining ways to engage more patients with the MCP. Ms. Jones answered committee member questions and directed those interested in reviewing the full report to the CCA website (<https://cca.virginia.gov/reports>).

7. Presentation: Virginia's Medical Cannabis Program Updates

Mr. Wright provided updates on the MCP. He noted that many changes have occurred in the MCP since the Board of Pharmacy's report to the Council members in September 2022. He presented an overview of the program, including patient requirements and current MCP data and technology initiatives.

Ms. Cohen reviewed the MCP's product review process. She stated that the CCA's top priority is to ensure safety, compliance, and transparency. Ms. Cohen noted that the cornerstone of the review process is independent laboratory testing. She reported that every type of product undergoes thorough testing for its contents, potency, and safety.

Mr. Zach Smith then reported on MCP support services available to the public, MCP patients, and practitioners. He reviewed common inquiries reported to the MCP team and the

average resolution speed of inquiries being resolved. Mr. Smith reviewed all the options available (website, email, phone, and mail) for members of the public to contact the MCP team.

Mr. Wright answered the Council member's questions.

8. Member Discussion

Members discussed the presentations, resulting in no new discussion during this period.

9. Next Steps

Mr. Markva stated that the next Advisory Council meeting will be scheduled for Spring 2025. The meeting will be in person.

Mr. Markva asked Council Members for suggestions on topics to be addressed or issues to be covered at the next meeting. Ms. Caves advocated for earlier scheduling of meetings. Ms. Abebe suggested that a provider survey be completed by the CCA and then discussed at the next meeting. She added that it would be nice to have providers or other people from the medical community speak on their experience with the MCP. As a follow-up to a suggestion she made at the last meeting, Ms. Ackley informed the Council that since the last meeting, she had attended the National Prevention Network Conference. She also noted that she would like to revisit the suggestion to develop Virginia Department of Education guidelines for schools on vapes. Ms. Ackley will provide Ms. LaBelle with informational materials she collected at the conference for distribution to Council members. Mr. Krawitz suggested the Council consider methods for making cannabis-related information more understandable for Virginia residents.

10. Public Comment

Mr. Markva welcomed public comments.

Mr. Brad Kutner, a reporter for Radio IQ, a statewide NPR outlet, asked if someone from the Council would share their biggest, most impactful takeaway from the meeting.

11. Adjournment

The Advisory Council adjourned at 3:34 PM.

APPENDIX C: DRAFT MINUTES FROM MAY 12, 2025, CPHAC MEETING



**Cannabis Control Authority
Cannabis Public Health Advisory Council Meeting
As Required by 2021 Acts of Assembly, Chapter 551
May 12, 2025**

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**Deep Run III – Conference Rooms A/B
DRAFT MEETING MINUTES**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Craig Markva (on behalf of Secretary Janet V. Kelly, Chair)
Ngiste Abebe, Vice Chair
Michael Krawitz (virtual)
Dr. Michael Gillette
Christopher Lindsay (on behalf of Dr. Karen Shelton)
Shawn Casey (on behalf of Jamie Patten)
Melissa K. Ackley
LeNelle M. Mozell
Linda Jackson
Arne Owens
Nikeya Thomas (on behalf of Joesph Guthrie)
Dr. Cynthia Morrow (virtual)
Rev. Dr. Jermon Barber (virtual)

LEGAL COUNSEL: James Flaherty, Office of the Attorney General

PRESENTERS: Colleen Hughes, Director, Office of Behavioral Health
Wellness, Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and
Developmental Services

Aron Lichtman, PhD, Professor, Department of Pharmacology
and Toxicology, VCU School of Medicine

Hanna Jones, Cannabis Control Authority

1. Introductory Remarks & Roll Call

Mr. Markva called the meeting to order at 2:15 PM.

2. Determination of Quorum

Mr. Markva determined that, with 10 members present in-person, the Council had a quorum.

3. Electronic Participation Approval

The following Advisory Council members joined the meeting remotely:

- Dr. Cynthia Morrow - the member's principal residence being more than 60 miles from the meeting location; participated from her office in Roanoke, VA
- Mr. Michael Krawitz – medical appointment and the member's principal residence being more than 60 miles from the meeting location; participated from Southwest Virginia
- Rev. Dr. Jerome Barber – illness and the member's principal residence being more than 60 miles from the meeting location; participated from his home in Hampton, VA

Upon motion by Dr. Gillette, and duly seconded by Ms. Abebe, Council members approved the members' electronic participation.

4. Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes

Upon motion by Ms. Abebe, and duly seconded by Dr. Gillette, Council members voted to approve the draft minutes from the Advisory Council meeting on November 18, 2024.

5. Council Organization Structure

Mr. Markva stated the CPHAC Vice Chair position was up for renewal and required a new vote. Ms. Abebe agreed to continue in the Vice Chair position for another term, if approved by the Council. Upon a motion by Ms. Jackson, and duly seconded by Ms. Mozell, members voted to approve Ms. Abebe as the Vice Chair for another term.

6. Presentation: 2024 Young Adult Survey

Colleen Hughes, Director, Office of Behavior Health Wellness, within the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, presented key findings of the 2024 Virginia Young Adult Survey (YAS). She noted YAS is a biennial, state-wide survey of young adults ages 18-25. YAS aids in addressing gaps in the continuum of prevention and epidemiological data to focus on young adults and to strengthen data-driven prevention planning. She noted that the purpose of YAS is to better understand young adults' experience with substance use, mental health, and related topics to provide targeted prevention planning. Approximately 6,000 participants completed the 2024 survey compared to 5,000 in 2022, and 133 out of 135 Virginia localities had at least one response.

The Substance Use section of the survey, which includes cannabis, saw decreases in lifetime cannabis use-rates between 2022 and 2024. She noted that the 2024 YAS results show nearly half of young adults who used cannabis in the past 30 days reported using it to help manage mental health related symptoms. According to Ms. Hughes, 1 in 3 survey respondents perceived 'no risk' or 'slight risk' of people harming themselves by smoking cannabis regularly, and over half saw 'no' or 'slight risk' with occasional use. She highlighted that despite the lack of a retail market, most young adult cannabis users perceive cannabis as easy

to access, citing ease of access to cannabis through friends or family. For the full report see: <https://www.vasis.org/yas>

7. Presentation: Cannabis Pharmacology

Dr. Lichtman, Professor and researcher, VCU Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology, presented an overview of Cannabis Pharmacology.

His presentation covered: constituents of cannabis and its pharmacological effects; general mechanisms of THC and CBD; the endogenous cannabinoid system; CB1 and CB2 receptors; physiological functions; cannabinoid-based medications; THC; CBD; synthetic cannabis; and a THC-CBD clinical trial he conducted.

Dr. Lichtman reviewed facts about the cannabis plant and discussed FDA approved cannabinoid-based medications.

Dr. Lichtman ended his presentation by making note of the continued challenges for medicinal cannabis.

8. Presentation: Medical Cannabis Program Practitioner Survey

Ms. Jones presented key findings of the 2025 Medical Cannabis Program Practitioner Survey. The purpose of the survey was to assess practitioners' experiences in certifying patients, beliefs and attitudes regarding the medical cannabis program (MCP), and perspectives on ways to improve the program. She noted the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority (CCA) initiated the launch of the MCP Practitioner Survey based on a recommendation from the recently completed MCP Patient Survey.

Ms. Jones noted that 73 percent of surveyed practitioners reported being 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the current state of the medical cannabis program. Surveyed practitioners also reported the most rewarding aspects of participating in the MCP were helping patients' overall quality of life, the opportunity to provide patients with alternative treatment options, and giving patients access to medical grade products.

Based on practitioner feedback, Ms. Jones presented recommendations for enhancing the MCP: (1) collaborating in development in cannabis-specific Continuing Medical Education (CME) training for MCP practitioners, (2) providing medical cannabis training or coursework for practitioners issuing written certifications in Virginia, (3) increasing the number of educational resources and other information targeted toward practitioners, (4) addressing system issues with the current MCP written certification portal, and (5) assessing ways to engage more practitioners with the MCP.

Ms. Jones directed those interested in reviewing the full report to the CCA website: cca.virginia.gov/reports

9. Next Steps

Mr. Markva stated that the next Advisory Council meeting will be scheduled for Fall 2025.

10. Public Comment

Mr. Markva welcomed public comments.

Chip A. commented on the Medical Cannabis Program. He stated that the program does not serve the patients or cannabis farmers.

Joe Domino commented on Virginia's pharmaceutical processor regulatory framework and the small percentage of residents it serves. He concluded that Virginians deserve a cannabis industry that supports small businesses, and truly meets the needs of Virginians through affordable, accessible, high-quality, and safe cannabis products.

Mary Lynn Mathre, a Virginia registered nurse and President and Co-Founder of Patients Out of Time, announced an upcoming conference, The Sixteenth National Clinical Conference on Cannabis Therapeutics. She noted the theme of the conference is Cannabis: From Prohibition to Recognition.

Tamara Herndon, a medical cannabis patient, commented on limited dispensary locations, lack of product availability, and low quality of product being sold.

11. Adjournment

The Council adjourned at 5:00 PM.