

# CANNABIS CONTROL COMMISSION: FOURTH ANNUAL ACTIVITIES REPORT

October 14, 2021

Report as mandated by Chapter 55 of the Acts of 2017, *An Act  
to Ensure Safe Access to Marijuana*



## **LEGISLATIVE MANDATE**

Under Chapter 55 of the Acts of 2017, An Act to Ensure Safe Access to Marijuana (Act), the Cannabis Control Commission (Commission) is charged with implementing the statutory and regulatory schemes governing the adult-use, and now medical-use, marijuana programs. The following report is issued pursuant to Section 31 of the Act, which provides in relevant part:

“The commission shall annually submit a complete and detailed report of the commission’s activities, including a review of the implementation and enforcement of this chapter and the governance structure established in this chapter, not more than 90 days after the end of the fiscal year to the governor, the attorney general, the treasurer and receiver-general, the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate, the chairs of the joint committee on marijuana policy and the chairs of the house and senate committees on ways and means.” St. 2017, c. 55, § 31.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Purpose**

This report provides information regarding the implementation under the Act of the adult-use marijuana program pursuant to the aforementioned legislative mandate, inclusive of the medical-use program, which the Commission successfully transferred from the Department of Public Health on December 24, 2018.

### **Findings**

The Commission continues to focus on the legislative mandate to implement the maturing adult-use marijuana and Medical Use of Marijuana Programs. To that end, the Commission continues to make significant progress in areas the Legislature identified and weathered the COVID-19 State of Emergency with minimal impact to internal and industry operations.



## INTRODUCTION

On November 8, 2016, Ballot Question 4 “Legalize Marijuana” passed with 53.6% of the vote in the Commonwealth. At that time, Massachusetts joined seven other states, plus the District of Columbia, that had legalized marijuana for adult use (also known as recreational use). That number has since increased to 18 states as well as some territories. The resulting law in Massachusetts, Chapter 334 of the Acts of 2016, *The Regulation and Taxation of Marijuana Act*, which was amended by Chapter 55 of the Acts of 2017, *An Act to Ensure Safe Access to Marijuana*, delegated to the Commission initial oversight of the adult-use cannabis program as well as directed the transfer of the Medical Use of Marijuana Program from the Department of Public Health (DPH) to the Commission. In September 2017, the Governor, Treasurer, and Attorney General first appointed five Commissioners to serve in full-time positions for terms ranging from three to five years in accordance with statute. Executive Director Shawn Collins was unanimously appointed in November 2017 and the agency is currently staffed by 84 employees, including the Commissioners and Executive Director. In January 2021, the Commission onboarded three new Commissioners, Nurys Camargo, Bruce Stebbins, and Ava Callender Concepcion, followed by the onboarding of one additional Commissioner, Kimberly Roy, in July as the result of Commission vacancies created by term expirations or resignations. Chairman Steven J. Hoffman continues to fulfill his inaugural term.

The mission of the Commission is to honor the will of Massachusetts voters by safely, equitably, and effectively implementing and administering the laws enabling access to medical and adult-use marijuana in the Commonwealth.

The Commission continues to facilitate the creation of a safely regulated industry that creates entrepreneurial and employment opportunities and generates incremental tax revenues in and to communities across the Commonwealth—and already serves as a best practice model for other states. The Commission developed policies, procedures, and a regulatory structure to encourage and enable full participation in the marijuana industry by people from communities that were previously disproportionately harmed by marijuana prohibition and enforcement and positively impact those communities. The Commission has also built out data collection methods to monitor and measure progress toward statutory goals and objectives, most notably through an Open Data Platform. With these programs and regulations in place, the Commission continues to build an industry that prioritizes participation by small and large participants alike and with full participation by people of color, women, veterans, and Massachusetts farmers.

Due to the Commission’s investments in technology resources as a result of Legislative support, the Commission navigated the COVID-19 State of Emergency with minimal impact to external or internal operations. The agency successfully, and rapidly, pivoted to remote



operations to ensure the health and safety of staff and also amended external policies and procedures consistent with public health guidance to ensure the continued and sustained health and safety of patients, consumers, and industry personnel.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF ADULT- AND MEDICAL-USE MARIJUANA PROGRAMS**

### **Law**

Statute. The Commission's enabling statute, M.G.L. c. 94G outlines Commission operations, the adult-use marijuana program and adult use applicant and licensee requirements. M.G.L. c. 94I outlines the Medical-Use Marijuana Program and its respective requirements. Effective December 11, 2020, M.G.L. c. 94G, was amended by St. 2020, c. 227, § 37 which allows Marijuana Establishments to cultivate, manufacture, sell or otherwise transact business with hemp and hemp products cultivated and manufactured under a Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources registration and in compliance with regulations set forth by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Promulgation of Regulations. On March 23, 2018, the first iteration of regulations, 935 CMR 500.000: *Adult Use of Marijuana*, were published in the Massachusetts Register. On December 24, 2018, the Medical Use of Marijuana Program successfully transferred from the Department of Public Health to the Commission, as was mandated by Section 64 of the Act. At that time, the Commission then promulgated 935 CMR 501.000: *Medical Use of Marijuana* and 935 CMR 502.000: *Colocated Adult Use and Medical Use Marijuana Operations*. Most recently, on January 8, 2021, the Commission promulgated amendments to 935 CMR 500.000: *Adult Use of Marijuana* and 935 CMR 501.000: *Medical Use of Marijuana*; and repealed 935 CMR 502.000: *Colocated Adult-use and Medical-use Marijuana Operations*, which was incorporated, as applicable, in 935 CMR 500.000 and 935 CMR 501.000.

Guidance. In addition to its regulations, the Commission regularly drafts and adopts guidance for licensing and other administrative processes implicated by its legislative mandate. To date, the Commission has published more than 30 guidance documents designed to assist consumers, patients, applicants, business owners, and local officials. Guidance documents are available at <https://mass-cannabis-control.com/guidancedocuments/>. Upon the promulgation of revised regulations in January 2021, the Commission has reviewed and revised or deployed additional public documents to assist the public. The Commission will continue to issue guidance documents from time to time as matters arise to aid the public with navigating and complying with the various regulations.

### **Licensing and Enforcement**



Through the adult-use cannabis program, the Legislature required the Commission to certify priority applicants, license Marijuana Establishments, and register agents. To that end, the Commission and its vendors designed and implemented the Massachusetts Cannabis Industry Portal (MassCIP), its electronic registration system, and seed-to-sale tracking system, Metrc. As of January 2020, Medical Marijuana Treatment Center (MTC) application and licensing information also transitioned to an electronic-based process through MassCIP, as part of integrating the medical program that was previously administered by DPH into the Commission's operations. Applications for the Commission's Social Equity Program are also received and processed through the MassCIP.

Priority Applicants. Between April 17, 2018 and May 22, 2018, the Commission offered an application process for priority certification in accordance with the Act. In total, the Commission received 322 submitted applications, and ultimately granted priority certification to 81 MTC (formerly referred to as RMD) applicants and 122 economic empowerment applicants. As of September 1, 2021, the Commission has issued seven (7) commence operations approvals to economic empowerment priority applicants and eight (8) commence operations approvals to social equity program participants, enabling them to begin operating licensed Marijuana Establishment in the Commonwealth.

Provisional and Final Licensees. As of September 1, 2021, the Commission had received 1,263 license applications for adult-use Marijuana Establishments. Additionally, the agency had received 31,155 applications for Marijuana Establishment agent registration. Commission staff are presently reviewing 236 adult-use license applications and further reviewing and inspecting 472 provisional licensees. The following is a summary breakdown of the 1,233 Marijuana Establishment license applications fully submitted to the Commission as of August 5, 2021:

- 254 MTC Priority Applicants (which, according to the Act, is an MTC previously approved by DPH when it administered the Medical Use of Marijuana Program and had at least obtained an MTC provisional license as of April 1, 2018);
- 87 Economic Empowerment Applicants (as certified by the Commission in 2018 in accordance with mandated timeframe);
- 147 Social Equity Participant Applicants (as approved through the Commission's Social Equity Program);
- 390 Expedited Applicants (as allowed through Commission policy approved in November 2019 as part of a process for certain businesses to receive expedited review). These applicants consist of minority-, women-, and veteran-owned businesses as certified by the Supplier Diversity Office as well as Independent Testing Laboratories, Outdoor Cultivators, Marijuana Microbusinesses, and Craft Marijuana Cooperatives. Social Equity Program Participant Applicants also receive expedited review; and



- 532 General Applicants which do not meet any of the aforementioned criteria.

As of September 1, 2021, 289 licensees have received notices from the Commission that authorize them to commence business operations in the Commonwealth; another 58 entities currently possess final licenses, and 562 have been approved for provisional licenses. On August 31, Marijuana Establishments surpassed \$2 billion in retail and delivery sales since the first two adult-use retail stores opened in Massachusetts November 20, 2018.

In addition to regulating the adult-use cannabis industry in Massachusetts, the Commission has overseen the Medical Use of Marijuana Program since it was transferred from DPH in December of 2018 as required under the Act. As of September 1, 2021, the Medical Use of Marijuana Program is currently comprised of the following: 43 provisional licensees, 10 final licensees, and 83 additional licensees that have commenced full operations to serve registered qualifying patients and caregivers through vertically integrated MTCs. The Commission is currently reviewing four (4) MTC license applicants.

## **Communications**

The Commission has maintained regular contact with members of the public through various media and platforms. Beyond their monthly public meeting schedule, Commissioners regularly attend and present at public events, which has continued remotely and in-person during the COVID-19 State of Emergency as appropriate. Departing and incoming Commissioners have made or participated in numerous presentations, speeches, panel discussions, and other forums before stakeholder groups such as community organizations, chambers of commerce, attorneys, municipal officials, industry groups, and law enforcement.

This spring, the Commission launched a revamped website at [MassCannabisControl.com](https://MassCannabisControl.com) that incorporates medical- and adult-use cannabis program content on one platform for the first time to better serve all Commission constituents throughout the Commonwealth. New features of the enhanced website design include unique user-driven experiences using color-coded wayfinding and a range of visitor personas (e.g. patients, government officials, and parents); integrated web copy for improved searchability; stronger web accessibility standards; and embedded data compiled from external resources such as the Commission's [Open Data Platform](#) and new [Product Catalog](#). Since its launch in April, the new website has received more than 790,994 page views and 618,992 unique visits as of September 14, 2021.

From July 2020 through June 2021, the Commission sent, on average, 5 email campaigns to subscribers per month. The Commission's social media presence includes Instagram (@CannabisControlCommission, 2,850 followers) and LinkedIn



(@CannabisControlCommission, 3,561) in addition to Twitter (@MA\_Cannabis, 8,668 followers) and Facebook (@MassCCC, 2,743 followers). Through these various channels, the Commission continues to communicate with the public regarding the work of the agency and its regulation of the developing industry.

### Public Awareness Campaign

The Commission utilized organic promotion in FY21 to highlight the latest segment of its state-mandated public awareness campaign, More About Marijuana ([www.MoreAboutMJ.Org](http://www.MoreAboutMJ.Org)). The campaign's educational messaging has been developed in partnership with MORE Advertising, and has previously utilized third-party research, surveys, and focus groups of Massachusetts residents to develop and implement content. Although More About Marijuana was not funded for FY21, Communications utilized this past April 20—a date often recognized by adult-use cannabis consumers—as [an opportunity to return the public's attention to the risks of consuming unregulated vaping products](#) following the vaping public health emergency, EVALI, that was declared in the Commonwealth and throughout the country during FY20.

As reported in previous legislative reports, the initial focuses of the Commission's public awareness campaign in 2018 and 2019 included youth prevention and responsible adult-use consumption. Additional materials have highlighted the [dangers of home manufacturing](#), COVID-19 safety tips for cannabis consumers, and the risks of vaping, in response to statutory requirements and health emergencies. Related print collateral and branded outreach materials remain accessible to the public through the Massachusetts Health Promotion Clearinghouse (<https://massclearinghouse.ehs.state.ma.us/category/Cannabis.html>). In FY20, the Commission's Communications and Research departments also spearheaded the release and review of pre-campaign surveys to inform potential direct-to-youth campaign messaging for future campaign segments that could enhance the campaign's ongoing focus on the risks of underage consumption.

### **Equity Programming and Community Outreach**

The Commission continues to assess and build upon the nation's first statewide Social Equity Program (SEP). The Equity Programming and Community Outreach team is led by the Director of Equity Programming and Community Outreach, a redesigned role that will ensure a lens of equity is placed on the entirety of the Commission's work. The department has also expanded to include additional staff to support the agency's robust community outreach needs to Disproportionately Impacted Areas (DIA), the medical community, municipalities and government officials, academia, and other priority constituents.

The SEP is designed to build a pathway into the legal cannabis industry for individuals



disproportionately impacted by previous prohibition. The SEP focuses on those most impacted by the War on Drugs, marijuana prohibition, disproportionate arrest and incarceration, and provides training, technical assistance, and mentorship for entry into the regulated marketplace across four areas: entrepreneurship, entry- and managerial-level workforce and professional development, and ancillary business support. Its overall mission is to decrease the disparities in life outcomes for impacted individuals and improve the quality of life for those from DIAs. Commission staff have initiated a three-year strategic planning process to ensure the SEP continues to effectively meet its intended goals.

Both SEP Participants and Certified Economic Empowerment Applicants are eligible to jump the Commission's licensing queue when they submit a licensing application, receive certain fee waivers, and have exclusive access to Commission pre-certification and delivery and social consumption license types. As part of its latest regulatory review process, the Commission extended this exclusivity period from two years to three years. The agency also added new SEP criteria to expand participation to any individual listed as an owner on the original certification of a Certified Economic Empowerment Priority Applicant who satisfies certain criteria.

SEP Program goals are to:

- Reduce barriers to entry in the commercial marijuana industry, regardless of desired specialty within the industry;
- Provide professional and technical services as well as mentoring for individuals and businesses facing systemic barriers; and
- Promote sustainable, socially, and economically reparative practices in the commercial marijuana industry in Massachusetts.

To qualify for the Program, an applicant must meet one of the following criteria:

- Residency in an area of disproportionate impact for at least 5 of the past 10 years and income may not exceed 400% of the Area Median Income in the applicant's respective town/city;
- A past drug conviction, continuance without a finding, or an equivalent conviction in other jurisdictions, and residency in Massachusetts for at least the preceding 12 months;
- Marriage to, or the child of, a person with a drug conviction, a continuance without a finding, or an equivalent conviction in other jurisdictions, and residency in Massachusetts for at least the preceding 12 months;
- Any individual listed as an owner on the original certification of an Economic





Empowerment Priority Applicant who satisfies one or more the following criteria:

- Lived for five of the preceding ten years in an Area of Disproportionate Impact, as determined by the Commission;
- Experience in one or more previous positions where the primary population served were disproportionately impacted, or where primary responsibilities included economic education, resource provision or empowerment to disproportionately impacted individuals or communities;
- Black, African American, Hispanic, or Latino descent; or
- Other significant articulable demonstration of past experience in or business practices that promote economic empowerment in Areas of Disproportionate Impact.

The Commission opened the application for the SEP's first cohort in December of 2018 and approved 143 participants. Training launched in the summer of 2019 with three orientation seminars throughout the Commonwealth for accepted applicants.

Cohort Two doubled the number of SEP participants (285) and the Commission was able to deliver programming at a reduced cost, thanks in part to the new virtual environment. After programming began with an orientation seminar in July 2020, courses continued from fall 2020 through May 2021.

The Commission then opened the application for potential participants of Cohort Three in June 2021, with a submission deadline of this fall. At the time of this report, more than 500 individuals have applied to participate in the SEP. Currently, the agency is spreading awareness of the SEP's next cohort with an integrated communications and outreach campaign that includes paid advertising in community and ethnic media and on social media channels targeting audiences who are consistent with the SEP's eligibility criteria and teaching tracks.

## **Constituent Services and Government Affairs**

The Commission ensures timely responses to all inquiries from the public. Constituents may email, call, or write the agency with their opinions, questions, comments, and concerns. The Commission receives more than 100 inquiries per day. The Director of Constituent Services liaises with other departments and staff to resolve constituent cases. Similarly, staff members under the Chief of Investigations and Enforcement regularly respond to questions about licenses and applications, compliance, ownership, suitability, and other matters related to operating businesses. Prior to the pandemic, staff also attended community meetings and other public events to ensure people can speak directly with Commission representatives. The most frequently received questions and comments typically pertain to the Medical Use of



Marijuana Program, compliance, marijuana policy, the legal industry, Marijuana Establishments, social equity, and related state laws.

The Commission is also in regular contact with the Legislature and Executive departments on a variety of topics. Most often, legislative offices are in contact with the Commission on behalf of their constituents. From time to time, however, the Commission will reach out to the Legislature to request insight and/or consideration of matters within the Legislature's purview (e.g. [Report on Host Community Agreements](#), funding for social equity applicants and licensees, and [Social Consumption](#)).

To underscore the importance of accessible and responsive government, Commissioners assigned the Executive Director a goal of staff achieving an initial response time of 24 hours for all inquiries.

#### Patient Support for Medical Use of Marijuana Program

On December 24, 2018, the Medical Use of Marijuana Program transferred from the Department of Public Health and fully integrated into the Commission. Commission staff routinely respond to patient inquiries in addition to processing patient, caregiver, and provider registrations.

As of September 2021, the Medical Use of Marijuana Program is comprised of 97,003 Certified Active Patients, 7,815 Active Caregivers and 358 Certifying Healthcare Providers. Staff in Constituent Services assist patients, caregivers, and providers with registration and troubleshoot technical issues.

#### **Public Records and Transparency**

During FY21, the Commission's Records Access Officer received and responded to approximately 150 requests for public records. Although certain materials are withheld subject to the statutory exemptions to mandatory public disclosure under G. L. c. 4, § 7 (26), the Commission's goal is to promote transparency. To that end, staff regularly post the following:

- Applications granted provisional and final licensure, including renewal applications, found at: <https://masscannabiscontrol.com/public-documents/licensing-decisions/>
- Executive summaries, public meeting minutes, and other materials presented during Commission public meetings, found at: <https://masscannabiscontrol.com/public-documents/>.



The Commission maintains its Open Data Platform, sourced through the seed-to-sale tracking system, in order to provide readily available data catalogs to the public, including data sets for Sales and Product Distribution, Agent Registration and Ownership, and Applications and Licenses. The Open Data Platform can be found at <https://opendata.mass-cannabis-control.com/>. In September 2021, the Commission added medical sales data and continues to explore more technological solutions to increase the public's access to Commission records.

## **Finance**

Commission operations are supported through the Marijuana Regulation Fund, which is subject to appropriation. In FY21, the Legislature appropriated \$15.5 million in total for the Commission:

\$12.7 million for the Commission's Operations and \$2.8 million for the Medical Use of Marijuana Program. In total, the Commission spent \$11.3 million in FY21. The Commission continues to grow, hire additional staff, and implement legislative mandates as the industry matures while generating surplus revenue for the Commonwealth.

For FY22, the Legislature appropriated a total of \$15.2 million for the Commission: \$12.4 million for the Commission's Operations and \$2.8 million for the Medical Use of Marijuana Program. These funding levels will support the Commission's staffing plan, including new Investigators, particularly those with a background in financial audits and forensic accounting; new Enforcement counsel staff to ensure that licensees remain in compliance; a Director of Testing to build upon the agency's internal knowledge base of laboratory testing and analyses protocols; and constituent services support staff. In addition, the FY22 budget will enable the Commission to implement internal operational enhancements and leverage external consultants for mission-critical projects across the agency, including IT, Investigations and Enforcement, Research, and Operations.

## **Revenue**

The Commission's revenue from application, licensing, fines, and other fees, along with adult-use marijuana sales and excise tax revenue, is deposited into the Marijuana Regulation Fund. In FY21, the Commission collected \$25.1 million in revenue, of which \$1.2 million was via fines and \$23.8 million was via licensing and agent fees. Through June 2021, the Massachusetts Department of Revenue reported a total of \$64 million in marijuana sales tax revenue and \$112.3 million in marijuana excise tax revenue for FY21. In total, the Commission has generated a \$137.1 million contribution to the Marijuana Regulation Fund through fees and excise tax revenues.



## Personnel

The Commission's Human Resources Department is responsible for creating and implementing policies, processes, and programs to support the Commission's mission, strategic vision, and efforts to create a great place to work. The Commission has a strong commitment to attracting, rewarding, developing, and retaining an inclusive, diverse, and talented workforce. At the time of this report, the Commission employs 84 staff of which 62% are female and 39% are persons of color. The agency's management team is 53% female and 47% persons of color. Human Resources has rolled out various employee programs to support staff and foster a community of engagement while working in a remote environment.

## Research

The Commission's Research Department currently consists of a Director of Research and Project Coordinator and is in the process of rehiring a Research Analyst at the time of this report's drafting.

The Commission is required under Section 17(a) of G.L. c.94G to develop a research agenda to better understand the social and economic trends of cannabis in the Commonwealth. The law identifies at least seven categories of study and authorizes an expansion of that scope with the aim of informing future decisions that would aid in the closure of the illicit marketplace and monitoring the public health impacts of cannabis and cannabis legalization.

Research staff stratify categories of study into separate reports. Between July 1, 2020-July 1, 2021, the Commission released three comprehensive research reports (Table 1 below). All include original data analysis and extensive state-of-science literature reviews. The aims of each research report are fourfold: (1) establish a baseline prior to adult-use cannabis legalization to provide a point of reference for future years; (2) assess gaps in systematic data collection in the Commonwealth that is needed to fulfill the statutorily required annual research mandate; (3) discuss strategic plans for upcoming reports, and (4) present considerations for the Commonwealth based on a comprehensive assessment of items included in each report and as outlined [See Table 1 below for G.L. c.94G and St. 2017, c.55 ) research agenda items assessed and descriptions of each report].

Work is underway to disseminate two reports by January 2022, one assessing the science regarding effects of tetrahydrocannabinol ("THC") on the human body in response to St. 2017, c. 55, § 30 (f), and the second assessing Massachusetts data from the International Cannabis Policy Study, a collaboration with the University of Waterloo to better understand effects of cannabis laws across the U.S. and Canada. These agenda items will be included in the 2022 reports, scientific manuscripts, and national scientific meeting presentations. It is important to note that



all one-time (i.e., non-ongoing) research agenda items enumerated in St. 2017, c.55 will be complete by September 2021, including the final two reports in response to St. 2017, c.55 § 62 (“[Tax Study](#)”) and St. 2017, c.55 § 30(f) (“Potency Study” to be published in October 2021).

The Research Department continues to work internally, as well as collaborate with various state agencies, academic researchers, and other stakeholders to employ primary and secondary data collection methods to examine a spectrum of items. As cannabis policy research gains interest nationwide, the Commission set both long- and short-term goals to ensure its research is high-quality, impactful, comprehensive, and collaborative. Thus, in addition to research reports, the Department has also published six peer-review scientific articles and invited commentaries and presented research findings at national scientific conferences and academic institutions to advance the study of effects on cannabis laws. [See Table 2 below for Commission research scientific publications and Table 3 for Commission research presentations].

Commission Research

**Table 1. Commission Research Reports, July 1, 2020-July 1, 2021**

<p><a href="#"><u><i>Feasibility of Alternative Cannabis Tax Schemes: A Legislative Report &amp; Recommendation for Massachusetts</i></u></a> [St. 2017, c. 55 § 63]</p>	<p>The Department in collaboration with Chief Operating Officer, Department of Revenue, and KPMG LLC., assessed the feasibility of alternative tax schemes on cannabis and cannabis products, including by weight, volume, and tetrahydrocannabinol potency in the Commonwealth.</p>
<p><a href="#"><u><i>A Baseline Review and Assessment of Adult and Emerging Adult Cannabis Use: High-Level Findings from the International Cannabis Policy Study (2018-2019) and Literature Review</i></u></a> [G. L. c. 94G, § 17 (a) (b)]</p>	<p>The Department in collaboration with Dr. Hammond, University of Waterloo, assessed emerging adult (16-20) and adult (&gt;21) cannabis use and related behaviors from 2018-2019, including: cannabis use, mode of consumption, source of cannabis, ease of cannabis access, driving and riding behaviors, and perceptions of cannabis.</p>
<p><a href="#"><u><i>Identifying Disproportionately Impacted Areas by Cannabis Prohibition in Massachusetts. Worcester, MA. March 2021.</i></u></a></p>	<p>The Department in collaboration with the University of Massachusetts (University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute, University of Massachusetts Amherst, University of Massachusetts Lowell), and Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, assessed disproportionately impacted areas (DIAs) by the “War on Drugs” in Massachusetts.</p>



**Table 2. Commission Research Scientific Publications, July 1, 2020-July 1, 2021**

<p><b>Doonan SM.</b>, Hamilton JR., <b>Johnson JK.</b> Using National Incidence Based Reporting System (NIBRS) to Examine Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Cannabis Violations. Perspective Paper. The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse. Accepted July 22, 2020. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/00952990.2020.1803894">https://doi.org/10.1080/00952990.2020.1803894</a></p>
<p>Kritikos AF, Hodgkin D, <b>Johnson JK.</b> Past 30-day marijuana vaping: Prevalence and predictors of use in a nationally representative study of U.S. youth. American Journal of Preventative Medicine. Accepted July 2020. Published <a href="https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0749379720303445">https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0749379720303445</a></p>
<p><b>Johnson JK.</b>, Hodgkin D., Harris SK., Kritikos A, <b>Doonan SM.</b>, Johnson RM. Medical marijuana laws (MMLs) and dispensary provisions not associated with higher odds of adolescent marijuana or heavy marijuana use: A 46 State Analysis, 1991-2015. Accepted January 2021, Substance Abuse Journal (Saj). <a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08897077.2021.1900986?journalCode=wsub20">https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08897077.2021.1900986?journalCode=wsub20</a></p>
<p><b>Johnson JK.</b>, <b>Doonan SM.</b>, Cannabis policy heterogeneity and effects on research—complexity expected. Scientific Commentary. Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA) Network Open. Accepted February 2021. To be published March 18, 2021. <a href="https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2777628?utm_source=twitter&amp;utm_medium=social_jamajno&amp;utm_term=4607477201&amp;utm_campaign=article_alert&amp;linkId=113751067">https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2777628?utm_source=twitter&amp;utm_medium=social_jamajno&amp;utm_term=4607477201&amp;utm_campaign=article_alert&amp;linkId=113751067</a></p>
<p><b>Doonan SM.</b>, Hamilton JR., <b>Johnson JK.</b> “Discussion of the National Incident-Based Reporting System’s (NIBRS) Potential to Assess and Monitor Cannabis Incident Disparities: Response to Drs. McCormack and Walfield” Scientific Commentary. American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse (AJDAA). Accepted and Published February 2021. <a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/W5NQUIHPIWGR4AKYGU9Y/full?target=10.1080/00952990.2021.1881531">https://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/W5NQUIHPIWGR4AKYGU9Y/full?target=10.1080/00952990.2021.1881531</a></p>
<p>Das A., <b>Johnson JK.</b>, Hard G., Jones AA. State Medical Marijuana Laws and Initiation of Cigarette Use among Adolescents in the U.S., 1991-2015. April 2021. Cannabis. DOI: 10.26828/cannabis/2021.01.004. <a href="https://publications.sciences.ucf.edu/cannabis/index.php/Cannabis/article/view/90/48">https://publications.sciences.ucf.edu/cannabis/index.php/Cannabis/article/view/90/48</a></p>



**Table 3. Commission Research Presentations, External, July 1, 2020-July 1, 2021**

<p><b>Johnson JK., Collins S., Doonan SM.</b> Invited Lecture, Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Professor Rees Vaughan, Director, Center for Global Tobacco Control. Lecture Cannabis Policy and Research, 10/6/20.</p>
<p><b>Johnson JK., Doonan SM.</b> 4/13/21, Invited Lecture, “Brown Bag Lunch.” University of Washington’s (UW), Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institutes (ADAI), 4/13/21.</p>
<p><b>Doonan SM., Laramie O., Liu J., Sarkis M., Johnson JK.</b> Unexpected Public Health Emergencies—A Descriptive Analysis of Trends in the Massachusetts Medical-Use and Adult-Use Cannabis Markets. Research Society on Marijuana (RSMj) July 2021. Poster Presentation (virtual meeting, due to COVID).</p>

### Responsible Vendor Training (RVT)

Commission regulations 935 CMR 500.105(2)(b) and 935 CMR 500.105(2)(b) outline the Responsible Vendor Training (RVT) requirement for all current Marijuana Establishment and Medical Marijuana Treatment Center agents. The Research Department manages the RVT Program, including the application process, communication with applicants and current vendors, and any regulatory updates regarding RVT.

To date, the Commission has approved 20 applicants to be Certified RVT Vendors. Of the Certified Vendors, ten run their operations in Massachusetts while the remaining ten vendors operate outside of the state using either synchronous or asynchronous learning methods.

In 2021, the Research Department finalized [RVT Guidance](#) and [FAQ](#) documents to guide applicants through the RVT certification process. Additionally, an updated [RVT Checklist](#) was uploaded to the public documents section of the Commission’s website.

### **Office Space**

In 2019, the Commission, through the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM), moved to its Worcester headquarters and satellite office in downtown Boston to accommodate both the medical-use and adult-use cannabis programs. Also, in 2019, and as previously outlined, the Commission invested in computer hardware and transitioned



away from Mass.gov to an independent, secure system which enabled the Commission's agile and nimble COVID-19 response. The Commission has maintained remote operations for the entirety of FY21. Commission staff may utilize either of the Commission's office space as needed, subject to public health requirements. Commission staff, most notably compliance officers and investigators, also maintain a presence in the field through announced and unannounced inspections to ensure licensee compliance. Those staff take particular precautions to protect their own health as well as those they interact with.

## **COVID-19 Response**

On March 12, 2020, the Executive Director closed the Commission's offices to staff and the public and directed all staff to work from home. Thanks to the aforementioned investments in IT and equipment, Commissioners and staff have been working remotely since March 13, 2020. During this time, the Commission continued to implement its spending and hiring plans, including welcoming twenty new hires while working remotely. At the time of this report, the Commission continues remote operations to better support staff health and safety. Staff remain dedicated to the Commission's mandate and have increased productivity over the course of the year.

For licensees, patients, and other constituents, the Executive Director issued updated administrative orders to extend virtual community outreach meetings, curbside pick-up, and telehealth visits with certifying providers to September 1, 2021, to transition the industry and public out of the declared State of Emergency while still being mindful of public health and safety. Recognizing ongoing risks related to the pandemic, orders permitting virtual community outreach meetings have since been extended to April 1, 2022, while MTC curbside operations and waivers authorizing patient telehealth visits for initial certifications with Certifying Healthcare Providers have been extended and will be reviewed by Commissioners for continued efficacy in January 2022.

Investigative and compliance staff started virtual inspections as well as in-person visits to continue carrying out the Commission's licensing and compliance responsibilities. The Commission required licensees to report COVID-19 cases at their facilities and document them using initial and subsequent incident reporting. For inspections that required onsite visits, licensees were required to complete a questionnaire to notify the Commission of confirmed cases within 24 hours of a visit.

Commission public meetings continue online, consistent and compliant with the Governor's executive order relative to the Open Meeting Law and the Legislature's enactment of Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021. The Commission also created a [webpage specific to COVID-19 updates](#) and actions taken by the Commission in order to keep the public informed. The





Commission continues to receive, review, and process all license applications; in fact, in 2020, the Commission saw its highest number of provisional and final licensing applications.

## **CONCLUSION**

This fourth annual report identifies the Commission's ongoing operations since its establishment as well as needs implicated by the continued growth of the regulated medical- and adult-use cannabis industry in Massachusetts. As this report demonstrates, the Commission has anticipated needs, created significant efficiencies, and continued to meet requirements outlined in statute.

