



Cannabis Public Health Advisory Council
As Required by 2021 Acts of Assembly, Chapter 551
November 27th, 2023

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East Reading Room – Patrick Henry Building
MEETING MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: James Williams (on behalf of Secretary John Littel, Chair)
Ngiste Abebe, Vice Chair
Karin Addison
Michael Krawitz
Michael Gillette (virtual)
Joseph Guthrie
Arne Owens
Larry Keen
Ellen Harrison (on behalf of Nelson Smith)
Mason Byrd (on behalf of Linda Jackson)
Jeremy Preiss
John Whyte
Jerome Barber (virtual)
Cynthia Morrow (virtual)
Kyzwana Caves (virtual)

LEGAL COUNSEL: James Flaherty, Office of the Attorney General

PRESENTERS: Dr. Robert Lockwood, Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences
Dr. Michelle Peace, Virginia Commonwealth University

1. Introductory Remarks & Roll Call

Mr. Williams called the meeting to order at 2:07 PM.

2. Determination of Quorum

Mr. Williams determined that, with eleven members present in person, the Advisory Council had a quorum. There were an additional four members who attended virtually due to living more than 60 miles from the meeting location. Dr. Gillette participated from his home in Southwest Virginia, Dr. Morrow participated from her office in Southwest Virginia, Rev. Dr.

Barber participated from his home in Eastern Virginia, and Dr. Caves participated from her home in Norfolk, Virginia.

3. Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes

Upon motion by Ms. Addison, and duly seconded by Dr. Whyte, Council members unanimously voted to approve the draft minutes from the Advisory Council meeting on June 26, 2023.

4. Vote to Approve the CPHAC 2023 Annual Report

Upon motion by Ms. Addison, and duly seconded by Dr. Whyte, Council members unanimously voted to approve the 2023 annual report.

5. Presentation: Testing Systems in Other States

Dr. Robert Lockwood, from the Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences, presented an overview of Alabama state testing processes focusing on types of testing machines used and what is tested (e.g., blood, urine, and oral fluids). After providing the Council with an overview of cannabinoids, Dr. Lockwood provided an overview of cannabinoids and discussed how cannabinoid acetates are very similar, which can make it difficult to distinguish between them. He also discussed the importance of collect the best samples and using machines such as liquid chromatography and mass spectrometry. Oral fluids are becoming more common for evidence testing, as they are easier for non-medical professionals to gather. However, state laws must permit the use of oral fluids to be admissible in court, and some substances decrease saliva secretion. Alabama has updated its implied consent laws to include oral fluids to address the legal barriers.

Council members asked about the source of claims regarding the low potency levels of cannabinoids like THC-O and THC-P. Dr. Lockwood noted most of these claims are from the internet and there are limited peer-reviewed publications on these cannabinoids.

In response to Council members asking for more details on Alabama's oral fluid testing, Dr. Lockwood stated that Alabama is following oral fluid testing standards in the forensic science community and that these tests look for the presence of THC rather than any specific strain.

Mr. Williams called for a 15-minute break before the next presentation.

6. Presentation: VCU Department of Forensic Science Research

Dr. Michelle Peace, Professor from the Department of Forensic Science at Virginia Commonwealth University, presented on regulatory gaps related to cannabis vaping. Dr. Peace highlighted the dangers found in unregulated products that Virginians, especially young adults, sometimes use to vape cannabis. Her lab tested numerous samples across the Commonwealth and found that many inhaled cannabinoid products had contamination from bacteria, hair, fungus, and chemicals not meant to be inhaled. Dr. Peace's lab also found that many of these products contained either more or less CBD and THC than advertised. She stressed that mislabeling products and unregulated markets are dangerous for public health

and safety. Dr. Peace suggested more explicit thresholds and standards in the Commonwealth's cannabis market to improve public health and safety.

When council members asked Dr. Peace about the relationship between mental health and cannabis, Dr. Peace stated that her lab did not specialize in mental health research and encouraged members to research existing peer-reviewed publications. The Advisory Council discussed the impact potency and concentration changes in cannabis products have on cannabis consumers in Virginia.

7. Next Steps

Dr. Whyte stated that the Council needs to consider its focus for future meetings. He suggested the Council look at the impact of substances on the public, public perception of the industry, consumer trend data, potential risks of cannabis use, and Virginia's underlying public health needs. Dr. Whyte noted the Council needs to narrow its focus on state data rather than national. Mr. Priess stated his support for Dr. Whyte's suggestions. He informed the Council that the Cannabis Control Authority focuses on public perception and risks, as directed by the General Assembly, but agreed that the Council would benefit from focusing on what is useful, credible, and helpful for curious and current consumers. Mr. Krawitz responded that patients and medical providers are having difficulty identifying which product best fits the medical condition of the patient. He suggested this should be an area for the Council to address.

Mr. Williams told the Advisory Council that a meeting would be scheduled in the spring.

8. Public Comment

There were two public comments at this meeting. The first comment was from Ms. Lennice Werth from Virginians Against Drug Violence. Ms. Werth informed the Council that she has heard firsthand accounts about the benefits of medical cannabis for patients, but there are barriers that hinder patient access. She stated that these restrictions are pushing citizens to use unregulated products, exposing them to dangerous products like the ones in Dr. Peace's presentation. Ms. Werth urged the Council to move faster to help protect the public from these dangerous products.

The second comment was by Ms. MaryLynn Mathre from Patients Out of Time. She told council members about how the cannabis plant has been safely used for hundreds of years to treat all sorts of medical ailments. Ms. Mathre noted when other substances are added to cannabis, the product becomes unsafe to use. She also stated that the overly restricted Virginian market pushes people to use dangerous products and hurts legitimate businesses.

9. Adjournment

The Advisory Council adjourned at 4:45 pm.