



Joint Commission to Oversee the Transition of the Commonwealth into a Cannabis Retail Market

October 6, 2025, at 2:00 p.m.

House Room A, Lower Level

<https://studies.viriniageneralassembly.gov/studies/774>

The Joint Commission to Oversee the Transition of the Commonwealth into a Cannabis Retail Market (the Joint Commission) met in Richmond with Delegate Paul E. Krizek, chair, presiding.¹ The meeting began with opening remarks followed by presentations and discussion. Materials presented at the meeting are accessible through the [*Joint Commission's meetings webpage*](#).

Presentation: Virginia Medical Cannabis Program Overview & Opportunities

JM Pedini, Executive Director, Virginia NORML

JM Pedini provided an overview of legislation related to and the implementation of the medical marijuana program in the Commonwealth, highlighting (i) the creation of an affirmative defense to prosecution in 2015; (ii) the regulated program in 2016; (iii) updated and new conditions in 2018; (iv) the first dispensary sales in 2020; and (v) legalization of adult-use marijuana in 2021. They continued by explaining the medical marijuana pharmaceutical processors in the Commonwealth, highlighting the number of cannabis dispensing facilities around the state and explaining how medical cannabis products are regulated by the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority. JM continued their presentation by showing locations around the Commonwealth where consumers can purchase medical marijuana products. They also provided pictures of what these facilities look like on the inside and outside. They ended the presentation by explaining how to expand the medical marijuana program and noted that the Governor vetoed the legislation to update the program this year for the first time.

Presentation: The National Landscape on Transitioning from Medical Cannabis to Adult Use

Ngiste Abebe, Founder, KND Group

Ms. Abebe presented on transitioning from medical cannabis to adult use, including policy choices and case studies of Maryland and New York, and highlighting (i) public safety; (ii) patient access; (iii) fair markets; and (iv) generation of revenue. Noting that illicit sales of cannabis have thrived without a regulated market, Ms. Abebe recommended updating the proposed legislation to create the adult-use marketplace while also noting that the medical cannabis program would remain necessary and highlighting patient protections in the proposed

¹ **Members Present:** Delegate Paul E. Krizek (chair), Senator Lashrecse D. Aird (vice-chair), Senator Christie New Craig, Senator Adam P. Ebbin, Senator Saddam Azlan Salim, Delegate Katrina E. Callsen, Delegate Rae C. Cousins, Delegate Hyland F. (Buddy) Fowler, Jr., Delegate James W. (Will) Morefield, Delegate Marcia "Cia" S. Price

Members Absent: None

legislation, such as colocation of adult-use with medical cannabis, tax collection at the point of sale, and patient priority plans as a part of the conversion process.

Next, Ms. Abebe focused on fair market consideration, noting that the single greatest competition for legal operators is the illicit cannabis market, which is estimated to be \$2-3 billion in annual sales in Virginia. Ms. Abebe explained how litigation resistant legislation promotes fair competition, explaining how litigation negatively impacted Illinois and New York.

Lastly, Ms. Abebe presented on generating revenue and showed how medical inclusion generates revenue without impacting fair markets, using data from multiple states on their first year tax revenue. She included data on how medical inclusion stabilizes transitional markets and supports competition.

Presentation: Preventing Market Capture in Virginia: An Evidence-Based Risk Assessment

Max Jackson, Founder, Cannabis Wise Guys

Mr. Jackson presented on how to minimize risk to implementing an adult-use cannabis marketplace in Virginia with a limited-license marketing structure using examples from Florida, Pennsylvania, and Arizona. He then explained that a measured and phased market launch would be beneficial to Virginia, including strong guardrails to prevent market capture by large, multi-state operators. He also stated that limited-license markets fail to compete with the illicit market on price or access, undermining public safety and guaranteeing failure of social equity programs.

Presentation: Building a Fair and Competitive Cannabis Market for Virginia

Damian Fagon, Director, Bronx Cannabis Hub

Mr. Fagon presented on how to build a fair and competitive cannabis market in Virginia. He explained how equity fails without fair markets and advocated for a two-tier cannabis market where producers sell directly to retailers or work with independent distributors to keep the retail tier independent and accountable only to consumers. He highlighted the need to establish strict firewalls between different license types so that monopolies are prevented and explained how tiered licenses let farmers start small and grow.

Presentation: Enforcement of Illicit Products and Overview of the Differences in Potency Across Cannabis Products

Dr. Michelle Peace, Forensic Toxicologist, Professor of Forensic Science, Virginia Commonwealth University

Dr. Peace presented on her research laboratory's findings on vaping and cannabis products in the Commonwealth, showing how many (i) lacked labeled ingredients and/or THC concentration; (ii) mislabeled such concentrations; and (iii) contained contaminants such as mold, yeast, and fecal matter. She also presented on vapes confiscated from Virginia schools, with data showing an increase in confiscation from elementary school (K-5) students from Fall 2019 to Fall 2023, and made recommendations relating to these issues.

Public Comment

Members of the public were given a chance to speak regarding the information presented at the meeting.



Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Joint Commission is scheduled for Tuesday, December 2, 2025 at 1:00 p.m. in House Room C.

For more information, see the [*Joint Commission's website*](#) or contact the Division of Legislative Services staff:

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