Virginia Cannabis Control Authority
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

February 17, 2026

Deep Run III, Conference Room A (1st Floor)
9954 Mayland Drive, Henrico, VA 23233

MEMBERS PRESENT	John Keohane, Chair Anthony Williams Roxann Robinson Michelle Peace
MEMBERS ABSENT	Neil Amin, Vice Chair
LEGAL COUNSEL	James Flaherty, Office of the Attorney General
PRESENTERS	Jessica Fullerton, Cannabis Control Authority Hanna Jones, Cannabis Control Authority Jake Shuford, Cannabis Control Authority

1. **CALL TO ORDER**
   Mr. Keohane called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM.

2. **DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM**
   Mr. Keohane determined the Board had a quorum, given that four board members were present.

3. **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**
   Upon motion by Ms. Robinson, and duly seconded by Dr. Peace, the members voted to approve the meeting's agenda.

4. **APPROVAL OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING'S MINUTES**
   Upon motion by Mr. Williams, and duly seconded by Dr. Peace, the members voted to approve the draft minutes from the January 7, 2026, Board meeting.

5. MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY

Ms. Fullerton provided a brief overview of the Cannabis Control Authority's (CCA) Media Relations Policy. She stated that the Policy sets clear ground rules for how the CCA handles media inquiries and public communications, with a goal of being transparent and timely while ensuring information given is accurate and consistent. Upon motion by Ms. Robinson, and duly seconded by Mr. Williams, the members voted to approve the CCA Media Relations Policy.

6. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Mr. Shuford updated the Board on the current adult-use cannabis market legislation. He stated that there are different bills in the House (HB642) and Senate (SB542) that establish a framework for the creation of a retail marijuana market in the Commonwealth. Both bills would require the CCA to promulgate rules by September 1, 2026.

HB642 has a start date for cannabis sales beginning on November 1, 2026, a total tax structure ranging from 12.3% up to 14.8%, and maintains the CCA as a standalone, independent authority, while expanding the Board from 5 to 7 members.

SB542 has a start date for cannabis sales beginning on January 1, 2027, and the total tax rate would be 17%. It also includes an enactment clause which would create the Alcoholic Beverage and Cannabis Control Authority and restructure the CCA Board into an advisory policy board.

He stated that the licensing components under both bills are complex, and the CCA will be required to move quickly. The CCA will have regulatory authority for licensing marijuana establishments, and both bills require current Pharmaceutical Processors to pay a fee to convert their medical cannabis permits to dual-use permits. The conversion fees differ: HB6642 is $5 million, and SB542 is $15 million.

Mr. Shuford briefly reviewed medical cannabis related legislation (HB75 & HB426; SB332; HB391), public safety and enforcement bills (SB62; SB12; SB145; HB863, SB543), as well as hemp product legislation (HB308 & SB620).

7. REGULATORY UPDATE

Mr. Shuford updated the Board on two medical cannabis regulatory actions. One became effective January 14, 2026. The second regulatory action had a public comment period which ended February 14, 2026. One public comment was submitted. The Board considered the public comment and decided to move forward with the regulations as previously presented. Upon motion by Mr. Williams, and duly seconded by Ms. Robinson, the members voted to adopt the regulations.

8. MEDICAL CANNABIS PROGRAM DASHBOARD

Ms. Jones provided an overview of the CCA's launch of the medical cannabis program's public data dashboard. She stated that the purpose of the new dashboard is to increase transparency and provide insights into Virginia's medical cannabis program for patients, providers, and stakeholders.

Ms. Jones added that the data visualized in the dashboard is extracted from Metrc, Virginia's seed-to-seed tracking system, and that all data is aggregated. She noted the dashboard is updated monthly and displays medical cannabis program data regarding sales, plants, and licensees.

For more information and to view the data, visit the CCA's website: https://www.cca.virginia.gov/datadashboard.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Mr. Keohane opened the public comment period.

Joseph Domino, a consumer in the cannabis industry, commented on Ohio's recent antitrust enforcement against nine major multi-state cannabis operators. He pointed out that Virginia has its own Antitrust Act aimed at promoting a free-market economy and enhancing competition by prohibiting trade restraints and monopolistic practices. He stressed the importance of maintaining a legal, free market in Virginia.

Matthew Adolph, representing individuals adversely affected by cannabis prohibition, expressed his hope that Virginia will implement the cannabis impact licenses effectively.

Robbie Berkely addressed issues related to customer service at Virginia dispensaries.

Manal Elhag, a licensed hemp processor in Virginia, commented on the regulation of the proposed adult-use cannabis legislation in the state. She noted that the CCA should provide small businesses with a feasible way to enter the legal cannabis market and promote their participation in the regulated market, rather than creating conditions that may unintentionally exclude them.

Sherman Hom, Trovon Martin, Christopher Freidenstein, Janine Lewis, and Ellis Norman submitted written comments. A copy is attached.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The Board adjourned at 1:31 PM.

Public Comment at CCA Board of Directors Meeting on February 17, 2026

Name

Sherman Hom

I would like to…

Submit a written comment to the CCA Board

Topic

Regulatory Action

Written Comment

NOTE: The formatting of my public comment was altered when I cut and pasted the document into this box.

I kindly request the CCA to instruct me what email I can send the properly formatted public comment.

I thank you for your consideration.

Public comment:

January 14, 2026

Chief Executive Officer Jeremy Preiss
Virginia Cannabis Control Authority
Commonwealth of Virginia

As industry leaders in cannabis and pathogen genomics, we have spent decades working with quantitative polymerase chain reaction (qPCR) and culture-based methods for the detection of microorganisms. We are experts in the field with over 40 patents related to PCR and DNA sequencing based methods for detecting microorganisms. Kevin McKernan, Chief Scientific Officer at Medicinal Genomics Corporation (MGC) managed the Research and Development team for the Human Genome Project at the Whitehead Institute of MIT. He has over 65,116 citations related to his work in this field. Our scientists recommend microbial testing specifications that will ensure that medical cannabis plant material and manufactured products are safe for patients. Due to concerns for public health, the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority (CCA), should draft the cannabis testing regulations, which include those to detect microbial contaminants that reflect ongoing efforts at AOAC International, ASTM International, the United States Pharmacopeia (USP), the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) that are consistent with our findings at MGC.

The presence of microorganisms is common on plants, such as cannabis. One must be able to differentiate between harmless and/or beneficial microbes (bacteria, yeasts, and fungi) ubiquitous in nature and those that are human pathogens that have contaminated the cannabis plant material and/or manufactured products. Examples of pathogens that have caused human illness and even death affiliated with cannabis use are Salmonella species, Shiga toxin producing E. coli (STEC), Aspergillus flavus, A. fumigatus, A. niger, and A. terreus [1-33].

Current required tests for microbial contamination in states that have a medical cannabis program vary among the states. Some states require different combinations of total count tests, such as Total Viable Aerobic Bacteria (TVAB), Total Yeast & Mold (TYM), [Total] Bile-Tolerant Gram-Negative Bacteria (BTGN), and Total Coliforms (TC); as well as the six human pathogens listed above with various action levels for each test and each cannabis product type. On the other hand, other states, such as California, Montana, and Vermont only require tests for detecting the human pathogens Salmonella spp., STEC, A. flavus, A. fumigatus, A. niger, and A. terreus for inhalable products.
NOTE: Total count tests have action levels as colony forming units (cfu/g), which is the number of colonies that grow on the surface of an agar medium plate. Specific pathogen tests have an action level of "<1 cfu per 10 grams".

The current Virginia regulations — under 3VAC10-60 – Testing of Cannabis Products, issued by the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority, codified at 3 VAC 10 – 60. (Cannabis Testing Rules). 34

Under Chapter 60. Testing of Cannabis Products, Sec. 3VAC10-60-20. Laboratory requirements,
G. A sample of cannabis oil product shall pass the microbiological, mycotoxin, heavy metal, or residual solvent test based on the standards set forth in this subsection. The batch may be remediated with further processing.
1. For purposes of the microbiological test, a cannabis oil sample shall be deemed to have passed if it satisfies the standards set forth in Table 1 of Section 1111 of the United States Pharmacopeia.

H. A sample of botanical cannabis product shall pass the microbiological, mycotoxin, heavy metal, water activity, or moisture content test based on the standards set forth in this subsection.
1. For purposes of the microbiological test, a botanical cannabis sample shall be deemed to have passed if it satisfies the standards set forth in the most current American Herbal Pharmacopoeia Cannabis Inflorescence Standards of Identity, Analysis, and Quality Control.

Our first recommendation is requiring testing to detect the human pathogens that have been associated with cannabis use (the six pathogens listed previously) for processed products, such as oils for administration using a nebulizer or inhaler that can be administered through the inhalation route. The United States Pharmacopeia (USP) stated that "Many states with legalized cannabis markets now require that all cannabis goods intended for consumption by inhalation be tested for the four pathogenic Aspergillus species (A. flavus, A. fumigatus, A. niger, and A. terreus). When inhaled, all four of these species are known to cause a variety of immune lung disorders, ranging from asthma, allergic bronchopulmonary aspergillosis, and hypersensitivity pneumonitis to invasive and life-threatening systemic fungal infections in immunocompromised hosts." [35]

The number of states and territories that require microbial testing rules for inhaled cannabis products (flower, pre-rolls, vape pens, etc) was 25 in 2019 and 43 in 2025 [37] A comparative analysis of the required microbial testing rules for all jurisdictions with legal cannabis programs in 2019 and in 2025 showed that the percentage of states and territory that require the detection of the pathogens listed above has increased during this 6 year period (see the following table).

Microorganism (2019)	#	(%)	Microorganism (2025)	#	(%)	% Increase over 7 years
Salmonella species	22	(85%)	Salmonella species	41	(95%)	10%
STEC	4	(15%)	STEC	21	(49%)	34%

4 Aspergillus species 8 (30%) 4 Aspergillus species 24 (56%) 26%

Since other states and territories are in the process of either modifying or adopting their initial microbial testing rules and new states & territories will legalize cannabis in the future, we predict that the percentage of jurisdictions requiring the detection of microbial pathogens for inhaled products will continue to increase.

Our second recommendation is that total microbial count tests ("indicator tests"), such as TVAB, TYM, BTGN, and TC must not be required, because indicator tests do not directly test for pathogens. Total count tests do not provide pathogen-specific data relevant to cannabis safety. Relying on broad microbial counts provides no clear indication of human health risk.

Rationale for Second Recommendation
1. Lack of Pathogen-Specific Data
According to the American Herbal Pharmacopoeia's 2014 Monograph on Cannabis Inflorescence [38], total microbial count tests should not be used as a basis to fail cannabis samples simply for exceeding action levels. These tests, which include TVAB, TYM, BTGN, and TC do not differentiate between harmful and benign microorganisms. Therefore, a total count test result provides no information about the presence of human pathogens. Moreover, there are 35 microbiological pesticides that have been approved for cannabis cultivation by one or more states (MGC dataset). The primary ingredient in these microbiological pesticides is either a beneficial bacterial or fungal strain. These beneficial microorganisms prevent pest infection (bacterial, fungal, insect, and/or nematode cannabis pathogens) that could lead to reduction of cannabinoid yield or total crop loss. Required total count tests cause cultivators to use toxic chemical pesticides instead of harmless microbiological agents.
2. No Link Between Total Count and Disease
There are no peer-reviewed studies demonstrating that specific thresholds of total microbial counts (TVAB, TYM, BTGN, or TC) are correlated with human disease. Without such research, it is scientifically unjustified to rely on these counts as criteria for failing cannabis samples.

3. No Clinical Evidence from Cannabis Use
To date, no clinical case studies have shown that total microbial counts (TVAB, TYM, BTGN, or TC) on cannabis lead to human illness. The lack of such evidence further questions the relevance of these tests for ensuring public health safety.

4. Failure to Satisfy Koch's Postulates
Koch's Postulates, the gold standard for establishing a microorganism's role in causing disease, cannot be fulfilled by total count tests. These tests do not isolate or identify specific pathogens, but instead measure a broad and often harmless community of microorganisms. Without isolating disease-causing species, total counts cannot accurately assess the risk of human illness.

Therefore, the following modifications should be made to the above table:

For microbiological testing of any batch of botanical cannabis product, cannabis oil product, or cannabis product required to undergo compliance testing prior to dispensing to a licensed retailer, cultivator, or manufacturer, the following standards should apply.

Standard
Shiga toxin producing strains of Escherichia coli and Salmonella species
< 1 CFU/10 grams
Aspergillus flavus
< 1 CFU/10 grams
Aspergillus fumigatus
< 1 CFU/10 grams
Aspergillus niger

< 1 CFU/10 grams
Aspergillus terreus
< 1 CFU/10 grams

NOTE: The action levels for all tests listed in the table above should be “< 1 CFU/10 grams” to allow for a sample size recommendation that follows.

For MICROBIOLOGICAL TESTING OF INFUSED EDIBLES

	Standard
Shiga toxin producing strains of Escherichia coli	< 1 CFU/10 grams
Salmonella species	< 1 CFU/10 grams
Listeria monocytogenes	< 1 CFU/10 grams

3. For MICROBIOLOGICAL TESTING OF INFUSED NON-EDIBLES

	Standard
Candida albicans	< 1 CFU/g10 grams
Pseudomonas aeruginosa	< 1 CFU/10 grams
Streptococcus aureus	< 1 CFU/10 grams

Our third recommendation concerns the allowable methods to detect these recommended 10 human pathogens for the different sample types, which should be molecular detection. In light of advancements in laboratory technology and the critical need for accurate and timely pathogen detection, MGC recommends that the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority (CCA) allow molecular testing methods, such as qPCR and other DNA-based assays, as validated technologies for specific cannabis pathogen testing.

Molecular methods offer significant advantages over traditional agar plating, which includes greater specificity & sensitivity for detecting the human pathogenic species of Aspergillus, Salmonella, and Shiga-toxin producing E. coli (STEC), Candida, Pseudomonas, and Streptococcus. These methods can provide results in hours rather than days, enhancing safety by enabling faster decision-making in product release, and reducing the risk of contaminated products reaching consumers. The adoption of molecular methods will align Virginia Cannabis Control Authority (CCA)’s testing regulations with those in other highly regulated industries, such as food and pharmaceuticals, which already leverage these tools to ensure product safety. By allowing for molecular testing, Virginia can strengthen its public health protections, support innovation in its testing labs, and streamline the regulatory compliance process for cannabis producers and testing facilities.

Most importantly, there are multiple AOAC certified Performance Tested Methods (PTMs) using cannabis as a sample type that are being used by licensed cannabis labs throughout the world. These PTMs were developed by the AOAC Cannabis Analytical Science Program (CASP), which is a forum where the science of cannabis analysis can be discussed and cannabis standards and methods developed. To date, AOAC has released three (3) Standard Method Performance Requirements (SMPRs) for the six human pathogens that

we have recommended for testing (see #1-3 below).
Detection of Aspergillus in Cannabis and Cannabis Products
https://www.aoac.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/SMPR-2019_001.pdf
Detection of Salmonella species in Cannabis and Cannabis Products https://www.aoac.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/SMPR-2020_002.pdf
Detection of Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli in Cannabis and Cannabis Products
https://www.aoac.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/SMPR-2020_012.pdf
NOTE: A SMPR for Detection of Listeria monocytogenes in Cannabis Edible Products will be approved in 2025.

Medicinal Genomics is a member of AOAC's CASP Microbial Contaminants Working Group. The goal and objectives of this working group are to:
Develop Standard Method Performance Requirements (SMPR) for cannabis and hemp
Extend a Call for Methods for each of the completed SMPRs
Empanel an Expert Review Panel to review candidate methods
Deliver consensus-based validated Performance Test Methods (PTMs) & Final Action Official Methods for the cannabis industry

Medicinal Genomics has a single AOAC Certified qPCR PTM for the detection of the 4 pathogenic Aspergillus species in one test and has a single AOAC Certified qPCR PTM for the detection of Salmonella spp. & STEC in one test. The sample types for the 4 Aspergillus species test are flower, infused products, oils & concentrates, and hemp. Moreover, the sample types for the Sal/STEC test are flowers, oils, chocolates, and hemp. Each of these two multiplex qPCR assays were validated by an independent 3rd party cannabis testing laboratory using the various cannabis sample

There are several major disadvantages of using plating methods to detect specific bacterial and fungal pathogens:
Cannabinoids, which can represent up to 30% of a cannabis flower's weight, have been shown to have antibiotic activity. Antibiotics inhibit the growth of bacteria. Salmonella & STEC bacteria are very sensitive to antibiotics, which may lead to a false negative result using a plating system vs. a positive result using a qPCR method. [40-41]
The USP stated "Detection of pathogenic Aspergillus species using culture based methods is very difficult, requiring a highly trained and experienced mycologist to correctly identify these pathogens by colony appearance and morphology, as there are many nonpathogenic species of Aspergillus that may be indistinguishable from those that are pathogenic [35].
Agar plating methods cannot detect bacterial and fungal endophytes [42-43] that live a part or all of their life cycle inside a plant. Examples of endophytes are the Aspergillus pathogens. Methods to break open the plant cells to access these endophytes for plating methods also lyses these bacterial and mold cells (killing these cells in the process). Therefore, these endophytes will never form colonies, which will lead to a false negative result using a plating system vs. a positive result using a qPCR method.
Selective media for mold plating methods, such as Dichloran Rose-Bengal Chloramphenicol (DRBC) reduces mold growth; especially Aspergillus by 5-fold. This may lead to a false negative result for this human pathogen. In other words, although DRBC medium is typically used to reduce bacteria; it comes at the cost of missing 5 fold more yeast and molds than Potato Dextrose Agar (PDA) + Chloramphenicol or molecular methods. These observations were derived from study results of the AOAC emergency response validation [44].

Therefore, a rule must be adopted that reads:
An AOAC Certified Performance Tested Method (PTM) that has an enrichment step with a minimum of sixteen hours (16 hrs) of incubation.
Our fourth recommendation is to increase the analytical sample testing size, which is not expressly defined in Virginia's current cannabis testing regulations. Under the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority regulations — specifically 3VAC10-60-20 (Laboratory Requirements) — laboratories must determine a "valid sample size for

testing” based on matrix, method, and internal procedures. However, the regulations do not establish a minimum analytical sample mass for microbiological testing, nor do they require that the analytical portion be collected in a manner proportional to batch weight.
While Virginia does require that laboratories obtain a representative sample — for example, under 3VAC10-60-20(B), a minimum of 0.5% of individual units from each homogenized batch of cannabis oil must be collected, and under 3VAC10-60-20(C), a botanical cannabis sample must be drawn from various points of the batch — the rules still do not define the gram-level analytical sample size used for microbiological analysis. As cannabis prices fall and product diversity expands, establishing a 10-gram analytical test portion may be necessary to ensure representative sampling.
A rule must be adopted requiring both (i) a defined minimum analytical sample size (e.g., 10–25 grams), and (ii) representative sampling from multiple locations within a batch. If a laboratory tests only 1 gram from a botanical cannabis batch — for example, 1 gram taken from a batch weighing several kilograms — this extremely small subsample significantly increases the likelihood of sampling bias. Microbial contaminants such as pathogenic bacteria or fungi are often heterogeneously distributed throughout cannabis plant material or infused products. A 1-gram analytical portion may therefore fail to detect contamination that exists elsewhere in the lot.
Therefore, MGC recommends that the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority adopt a requirement for a substantially larger analytical test-sample size (10 or 25 grams), collected representatively throughout the batch. Increasing both the analytical portion and sampling rigor would improve the probability of detecting clinically significant microbial contamination and enhance the accuracy and reliability of compliance testing performed by certified laboratories in the Commonwealth.
Our fifth recommendation is:
Implement Species-Specific Testing in Phases: Transitioning to species-specific pathogen testing should follow a phased approach to ensure accuracy, minimize disruption to the cannabis industry, and allow sufficient time for assay development and validation by method developers. These pathogen recommendations are grounded in clinical literature that highlights the potential harm posed by certain cannabis-associated microbes. Prevalence data has been sourced from Simon Fraser University (British Columbia, Canada) and Kannapedia.net, which catalog over >2,200 microbiomes of bacterial, fungal, and viral DNA found on cannabis plants across the U.S. This data helps identify and prioritize the most relevant pathogens for cannabis safety, which supports the need for a targeted testing approach.

This phased strategy will enable Virginia to adopt pathogen testing protocols that are more clinically relevant, focused on consumer safety, and aligned with best practices from other states. Species-specific testing truly protects consumers by differentiating between thousands of non-harmful fungi and molds that pose no risk. California and 23 other US jurisdictions have already adopted this modern approach, which mirrors the protocols used in hospitals to rapidly diagnose multiple pathogens using extensive PCR-based platforms for gastrointestinal and respiratory diseases. By adopting this methodology, Virginia can ensure a more accurate and safety-focused testing regime .

Phase 2 - Future Considerations - The following pathogens have been found on cannabis and known to cause clinical harm.

1. Fusarium falciforme - Kannapedia.net (https://kannapedia.net/) and References [45-50]; Fusariosis, Skin Infections, Pulmonary Infections, Disseminated Infections, mycotoxins - References [45-46,51-56]]
2. Fusarium proliferatum - Kannapedia.net, References [45-50]; Fusariosis, Keratomycosis, Sinusitis, Onychomycosis, Pulmonary Infections, Systemic Infections - References [45-46,51-56]
3. Fusarium solani - Kannapedia.net, References 45-50, 57]; Keratitis, sinusitis, endophthalmitis, onychomycosis, cutaneous infections, mycetoma and arthritis, organ membrane disruption - References [45-46, 51-56]
4. Fusarium oxysporum - Kannapedia.net, References [45-50, 57 ; Keratitis & onychomycosis in both immunocompetent and immunocompromised - References [45-46,51-56]
5. Mucor circinelloides - Reference [57]; Pulmonary, Cutaneous, Rhinocerebral, Gastrointestinal & Disseminated Mucormycosis - References [58-59
6. Mucor racemosus - References [57 ; Pulmonary, Cutaneous, Rhinocerebral, Gastrointestinal &

Disseminated Mucormycosis References [58-59]
7. Penicillium citrinum - Kannapedi.net, References[45,54,55,57]; Hypersensitivity Pneumonitis, mycotoxins, Severe Asthma with fungal sensitization, Occupational Lung disease, mycotoxins, particularly citrinin. Citrinin is a nephrotoxic compound, meaning it can damage the kidneys when ingested. Reference [45-46,50,56,58,60]
8. Penicillium expansum - Kannapedia.net, References[45,55,57]; Mycotoxins, particularly patulin, which is harmful if ingested. Patulin is known to cause a variety of adverse health effects, including nausea, gastrointestinal disturbances, and immune suppression. References [45-46,56,58]
9. Penicillium marneffei - Kannapedia.net, References [44,54]; Skin lesions, fungemia, pulmonary lesions, anemia. Typically impacts individuals with HIV, hematological malignancies, and immunosuppressive agents. It is the only species in the Penicillium genus known to cause systemic infections in humans - References [45-46,56,58,60]
10. Candida albicans - Kannapedia.net; Oropharyngeal candidiasis (oral thrush): Common in those with HIV/AIDS, Vulvovaginal candidiasis (vaginal thrush), Candidemia/disseminated infections, Pneumonia, Meningitis, paronychia, onychomycosis, endocarditis, eye infection, and intertriginous candidiasis - Reference [61]

I thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully,

Sherman Hom, PhD
Director of Regulatory Affairs
Medicinal Genomics Corporation

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Acknowledgement

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Public Comment at CCA Board of Directors Meeting on February 17, 2026

Name

Trovon Martin

I would like to…

Submit a written comment to the CCA Board

Topic

Regulatory Action

Written Comment

Good afternoon,

My name is Trovon “Duke” Martin, Founder of Natures Allstars and creator of NALLSTARS Academy, a Virginia-based, non-commercial, pre-licensing workforce and standards framework.

In December 2025, I submitted a complete Phase One proposal to multiple Commonwealth and local entities, including education, economic development, and regulatory stakeholders. That submission outlined a standards-first, education-driven approach designed specifically to address workforce readiness, consumer trust, and the distinction between regulated and unregulated cannabis prior to market opening.

After reviewing recent CCA materials and public communications, I noted continued identification of education gaps, misinformation risks, workforce preparedness concerns, and the need for trusted verification systems. I respectfully want to note that these challenges are not theoretical — and that structured, non-licensing solutions already exist and can be deployed before July and November 2026 retail timelines.

My comment today is not a request for approval or licensing, but a request for alignment: that pre-licensing education, documentation standards, and workforce readiness be treated as foundational infrastructure — not post-launch corrections.

Virginia has a unique opportunity to lead by preparing people and systems before the market opens. I appreciate the Board’s work and respectfully submit this comment for the public record.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Trovon “Duke” Martin
Richmond / Chesterfield / Colonial Heights, Virginia

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Public Comment at CCA Board of Directors Meeting on February 17, 2026

Name

Trovon Martin

I would like to…

Submit a written comment to the CCA Board

Topic

Regulatory Action

Written Comment

I respectfully submit a brief follow-up clarification to my prior comment for the public record.

My intent is to encourage the Board to recognize and support non-licensing, education-only workforce readiness programs as part of Virginia's pre-market cannabis infrastructure, separate from any licensing, cultivation, or commercial activity.

Early investment in education, documentation standards, and workforce readiness reduces post-launch compliance risk and consumer confusion and can be implemented prior to market opening without regulatory authorization.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Trovon "Duke" Martin
Richmond / Chesterfield / Colonial Heights, Virginia

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Public Comment at CCA Board of Directors Meeting on February 17, 2026

Name

Christopher Freidenstein

I would like to…

Submit a written comment to the CCA Board

Topic

Regulatory Action

Written Comment

I am a Virginia resident and prospective small-scale cannabis operator submitting comment regarding the structure of licensing in the adult-use market.

Strict license caps increase administrative pressure on regulators by:
- elevating the economic value of licenses,
- increasing litigation risk,
and encouraging rent-seeking behavior.

More open licensing systems — paired with strong compliance standards — allow regulators to focus on:
safety,
product quality,
and enforcement against bad actors, rather than gatekeeping market access.

I respectfully encourage the Authority to consider:
scalable licensing expansion tied to market data, broader access to cultivation and microbusiness licenses, and regulatory emphasis on compliance rather than scarcity.

Such an approach improves legitimacy, reduces enforcement burdens, and supports long-term market stability.

Thank you for your work and consideration.

Respectfully,
Christopher Freidenstein
Virginia resident

Acknowledgement

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Public Comment at CCA Board of Directors Meeting on February 17, 2026

Name

Christopher Freidenstein

I would like to…

Submit a written comment to the CCA Board

Topic

Regulatory Action

Written Comment

I'm a Virginia constituent writing to encourage broader access to cannabis business licenses, particularly for cultivation and microbusinesses.

Virginia's current framework limits participation through license caps, which disproportionately excludes rural Virginians who already have land, agricultural experience, and a need for new revenue streams.

In many rural communities, cannabis could function like: specialty agriculture,
nursery crops, or small-scale farming enterprises.

Capped licenses shift opportunity away from rural areas and toward well-capitalized urban operators, undermining local economic development.

I respectfully ask that Virginia:
- expand cultivation access beyond narrow caps,
- allow small, compliant operators to participate,
- and treat cannabis as an agricultural opportunity rather than a scarce privilege.

Rural Virginians don't need guarantees — just a fair chance to try.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
Christopher Freidenstein
Virginia constituent

Acknowledgement

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Public Comment at CCA Board of Directors Meeting on February 17, 2026

Name

janine lewis

I would like to…

Submit a written comment to the CCA Board

Topic

Regulatory Action

Written Comment

I am writing to urge you to include specific protections for Virginia-based insurance companies and agencies as the General Assembly finalizes the framework for adult-use cannabis retail sales.
Currently, the lack of federal clarity often forces cannabis businesses to use out-of-state "surplus lines" insurers. This drains millions of dollars in premiums out of the Commonwealth. To ensure our local insurance industry can compete and thrive, I ask that you support the following measures in any upcoming cannabis legislation:

- State-Level Safe Harbor: Create clear legal "safe harbor" language protecting Virginia-chartered insurance companies from state-level prosecution or loss of license for serving the legal cannabis industry.
- Support for Local Agencies: Include "insurance premium assistance" within the Cannabis Equity Business Loan Fund specifically for "Impact Licensees" who choose to work with Virginia-based insurance agencies.
- Standardized Coverage Requirements: Direct the Bureau of Insurance to collaborate with the Cannabis Control Authority to establish standardized coverage forms. This will allow local firms to develop "admitted" products that are safer and more affordable than out-of-state alternatives.

Virginia has the opportunity to build a model market that keeps economic benefits—including financial services and insurance—right here at home. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on how we can protect our local businesses during this transition.

Janine Lewis Tingler Insurance 7579801234

Acknowledgement

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Public Comment at CCA Board of Directors Meeting on February 17, 2026

Name

Ellis Norman

I would like to…

Submit a written comment to the CCA Board

Topic

Regulatory Action

Written Comment

Chair and Members of the Board,

My name is Ellis Norman. I am a lifelong Virginia resident and small-business owner preparing to apply for a cannabis impact license, and I am writing to bring a serious concern to the Board's attention before your February 17 meeting.

I was convicted of marijuana distribution under § 18.2-248.1 in Prince Edward County. I have the certified court records. By any definition, I am someone directly impacted by marijuana prohibition.

The House substitute for HB 642 would make criterion (iii) — residency in a Board-designated census tract — mandatory for all impact license applicants. This means that even with a documented conviction, an applicant cannot qualify unless the Board designates their residential census tract as "disproportionately policed" or "historically economically disadvantaged."

The Senate version, SB 542, treats any single criterion — including a conviction — as sufficient on its own. I believe the Senate's approach better serves the purpose of this legislation, and I respectfully ask the Board to weigh in favor of the Senate's version during any legislative consultation or rule-making.

I want to raise several specific concerns for the Board's consideration:

Mandatory geography excludes the most directly harmed. A person who was convicted and incarcerated for marijuana — who carries that criminal record permanently — would be disqualified if they do not live in a designated tract. Their conviction is not enough. Their incarceration is not enough. That result contradicts the stated purpose of social equity licensing.

Mobility is penalized. People leaving incarceration are told to find stable housing and employment, which often means relocating. Military veterans move where they are stationed. Families relocate for work. The House version punishes anyone whose life circumstances took them to a non-designated tract, regardless of

their personal history with marijuana enforcement.

The designations do not exist yet. As of today, the Board has not published which census tracts qualify under criterion (iii). Applicants have no way to evaluate their eligibility. With the application window expected to open July 1, 2026, this creates a requirement that is impossible to plan around. Even if designations are published within weeks, applicants who discover they are excluded have no realistic path to compliance.

Tract-level data will inevitably create arbitrary exclusions. Marijuana enforcement happened across Virginia — in rural counties, suburban communities, and cities. A statistical threshold applied to census tracts will draw lines that exclude individuals with documented convictions from real Virginia courts simply because their local arrest volume falls below a cutoff.

No comparable state program requires this. States with functional social equity cannabis programs — including Illinois, New York, and New Jersey — treat a personal conviction as a standalone qualifying factor. The House version would make Virginia's program uniquely restrictive.

I respectfully ask the Board to consider these points as it engages with the General Assembly on the final form of this legislation. If the mandatory criterion (iii) requirement survives conference, I would additionally ask that the Board: use the broadest possible data sources when designating tracts, publish designations with maximum lead time before applications open, and provide a transparent process for applicants to appeal or seek review of tract determinations.

Thank you for your time and for your work on building an equitable cannabis market in Virginia.

Best,

Ellis Norman

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