

**Cannabis Public Health Advisory Council Legislative Meeting -Minutes
Tuesday, February 10, 2026 · 3:00 – 4:00pm**

Members Present:

Dr. Madhumi Mitra
Dr. Deondra Asike
Dr. David Gorelick
Dr. Leigh Vinocur
Jocelyn Bratton-Payne
Karrissa Miller
Martin Proulx
Dawn Berkowitz
Dr. Nishant Shah
Audrey Johnson

Members Not Present:

Sen. Benjamin Kramer
Dr. Elizabeth Kromm
Christine Nizer
Del. Terri L Hill
Jason Semanoff
Arinze Ifekauche

MDH Members Present:

Erin Portillo
Dana Moncrief
Kate Natafji
Alexandra Nowalk

LRC- Cannabis Staff Present:

Mathew Swinburne
George Townsend

Members from Public:

None.

1. Open Meeting. 3:02 PM.

- a. The meeting was called to order by Dr. Deondra Asike, Council Chair, at 3:02 PM on Tuesday, February 10, 2026
- b. Kate Natafji took a roll call; 10 members were present, representing a quorum.

2. Legislative Work Group Updates and Actions

- a. **House Bill 640** – The bill proposes removing the Maryland Department of Agriculture from CPHAC. Dr. Asike noted that the work group had no prior discussion. Dr. Gorelick moved to take no position, which was seconded by Dr. Vinocur. The motion was approved unanimously.
- b. **House Bill 439** – This bill addresses employment protections for fire and rescue personnel using medical cannabis. Dr. Asike reminded the group that last year the work group chose to take no position. Dr. Gorelick stated his support for taking no position, noting MedChi had also opted for no position. A motion to take no position was made by Dr. Asike, seconded by Leigh Vinocur, and approved.
- c. **House Bill 622** – The bill would increase the number of employees a micro-dispensary may hire from 10 to 20 and revise cannabis agent training to focus on public health and safety standards. Dr. Vinocur moved to submit a Letter of Support, which was seconded by Karrissa Miller. The motion passed unanimously.
- d. **House Bill 544** – Concerning cannabis use in vehicles with minor occupants, the bill's language is unchanged from last year. Dr. Gorelick expressed concerns regarding the expanded criminalization and its potential inequities. Dr. Asike noted the original deadline for official testimony had passed, limiting formal opposition. The work group agreed to submit an updated Letter of Information from last year, highlighting public health and equity concerns. Dr. Gorelick moved to submit the Letter of Information; Dr. Vinocur seconded. The motion was approved.

3. Review/Discussion of Pending Legislation

George Townsend provided an overview of SB 594 (Cannabis Advertising Alterations Bill), highlighting five key changes: removal of language prohibiting indirect targeting of minors; clarification of therapeutic or medical claims; guidance on audience composition verification for media ads; an expanded exception for outdoor signage; and clarification that editorial mentions of cannabis businesses do not constitute advertising.

Dawn Berkowitz noted potential enforcement challenges, particularly regarding advertising appealing to minors, the new definition of medical claims, and

signage and editorial exemptions. She emphasized that MCA has not taken an official position on the bill.

Council members discussed public health implications, drawing on lessons from tobacco and alcohol advertising. Dr. Gorelick expressed concern that SB 594 could weaken youth protections and create loopholes for cannabis advertising. Members agreed that maintaining restrictions is critical to minimizing youth exposure.

After discussion, a motion was made by Dr. Gorelick, seconded by Dr. Vinocur, to submit a letter of opposition to SB 594. The motion passed with quorum confirmed. Dr. Asike will circulate a draft letter for Council review and feedback.

The Council also discussed House Bill 622 (MCA bill), with a hearing scheduled for March 4 and a submission deadline of March 2. A draft Letter of Support will be circulated for review before the next full Council meeting. Members agreed to begin preparations for both bills immediately, given the uncertainty of SB 594's hearing date.

4. Public Comment

No members of the public were present.

5. Adjournment- 3:47 pm.

With no further business, Dr. Asike adjourned the meeting at 3:47 PM.