

**Cannabis Public Health Advisory Council Legislative Meeting -Minutes
Tuesday, March 24, 2026 · 3:00 – 4:00pm**

Members Present:

Dr. Deondra Asike
Jocelyn Bratton-Payne
Dr. Leigh Vinocur
Karrissa Miller
Martin Proulx
Jason Semanoff
Dr. Nishant Shah
Arinze Ifekauche
Audrey Johnson

Members Not Present:

Dr. David Gorelick
Sen. Benjamin Kramer
Del. Terri L Hill
Dawn Berkowitz
Dr. Elizabeth Kromm
Christine Nizer

MDH Members Present:

Erin Portillo
Dana Moncrief
Kate Natafji
Alexandra Nowalk

LRC- Cannabis Staff Present:

Mathew Swinburne
George Townsend
Annie Carver

Members from Public:

Christine Boyd
Graham Antoszewski

1. Open Meeting. 3:05 PM.

- a. The meeting was called to order by Dr. Deondra Asike, Council Chair, at 3:05 PM on Tuesday, March 24, 2026. Initial discussion began while awaiting quorum. Quorum was confirmed following roll call.
- b. Kate Natafji took a roll call; Nine (9) members were present at the time of roll call, which constituted a quorum.

2. Review/Discussion of Pending Legislation

Mathew Swinburne from the University of Maryland's Legal Resource Center–Cannabis provided an update on key cannabis-related legislation. He reported that Mateo's Law (SB 110 / HB 114) did not receive committee votes in either chamber prior to crossover day and is therefore highly unlikely to advance this session.

Mr. Swinburne also discussed Senate Bill 594, which addresses cannabis advertising. Key concerns raised included the bill's initial narrow definition of medical and therapeutic claims (limited to explicit claims), removal of certain protections related to indirect marketing to children, and provisions allowing businesses to identify as women- or minority-owned and to reference branding in editorial content. Swinburne noted that the bill passed the Senate with amendments, including removal of the definition of medical and therapeutic claims and retention of provisions permitting indirect marketing to children. Additionally, language allowing dispensaries to display a "Trusted Source" designation externally was removed.

SB 594 is scheduled for a hearing in the House Economic Matters Committee, where LRC plans to testify. A related House bill (HB 1519) did not receive a vote, possibly indicating that the House may defer to the Senate version or may be hesitant to advance similar advertising changes.

Mathew Swinburne provided an overview of Senate Bill 1008, which would permit certain alcohol retailers with off-sale licenses to sell low-dose THC cannabinoid beverages (up to 5 mg), contingent on approval from local liquor boards. The bill also establishes a dual distribution and enforcement structure, shifting oversight from the Maryland Cannabis Administration to the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Cannabis Commission once products enter alcohol wholesale channels, and ending seed-to-sale tracking at that point. Additionally, the bill would redirect all tax revenue from these beverage sales to the State's General Fund, rather than existing cannabis-related funds that support public health, community reinvestment, and social equity initiatives.

Discussion among members highlighted several concerns, including: a significant expansion of cannabis retail access (potentially up to 1,500 alcohol retailers compared to ~100 dispensaries); increased youth exposure due to sales in

non-age-restricted environments; lack of staff training at alcohol retailers; challenges with enforcement and compliance; and the potential for disproportionate impacts on lower-income and Black communities where alcohol outlets are more concentrated. Members also raised concerns about co-location of alcohol and cannabis products, differences in onset and effects of cannabinoid beverages compared to alcohol, and the loss of funding for public health and equity programs.

Some members acknowledged potential benefits of a regulated market for tested products and noted that similar products exist in other states, but emphasized the need for stronger safeguards. Concerns were also raised about the bill undermining the existing cannabis regulatory and funding structure, as well as its potential use as a revenue-generating measure.

Following discussion, the Council voted on its position: a motion to oppose Senate Bill 1008 was made and seconded. The motion passed with a majority vote (6 in opposition to the bill, 1 in support, 3 abstentions). The Council agreed to formally oppose the bill, with consideration given to whether to submit a written letter of opposition or simply register opposition depending on the timing of the bill's hearing; should the hearing take place early the following week, since time would be insufficient to draft a full letter, the Council agreed formally registering its opposition would suffice.

3. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

4. Adjourn. 3:51 PM.

Citing no more items on the agenda for the day, Dr. Asike asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Vinocur motioned to adjourn the meeting, Dr. Shah seconded the motion.