

# CANNABIS CONTROL COMMISSION: THIRD ANNUAL ACTIVITIES REPORT

October 15, 2020

Report as mandated by Chapter 55 of the Acts of 2017, *An Act  
to Ensure Safe Access to Marijuana*



## **LEGISLATIVE MANDATE**

Under Chapter 55 of the Acts of 2017, *An Act to Ensure Safe Access to Marijuana* (Act), the Cannabis Control Commission (Commission) is charged with implementing the statutory and regulatory schemes governing the adult-use, and now medical-use, marijuana programs. The following report is issued pursuant to Section 31 of the Act, which provides in relevant part:

“The commission shall annually submit a complete and detailed report of the commission’s activities, including a review of the implementation and enforcement of this chapter and the governance structure established in this chapter, not more than 90 days after the end of the fiscal year to the governor, the attorney general, the treasurer and receiver-general, the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate, the chairs of the joint committee on marijuana policy and the chairs of the house and senate committees on ways and means.” St. 2017, c. 55, § 31.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Purpose**

This report provides information regarding the implementation under the Act of the adult-use marijuana program pursuant to the aforementioned legislative mandate, inclusive of the medical-use program, which the Commission successfully transferred from the Department of Public Health on December 24, 2018.

### **Findings**

The Commission continues to focus on the legislative mandate to establish and implement the adult-use marijuana program. To that end, the Commission made significant progress in the operational areas identified by the Legislature, including in the areas of licensing and enforcement, communications, equity programs, constituent services, public records, finance, personnel, technology, research, and office space.



## INTRODUCTION

On November 8, 2016, Ballot Question 4 “Legalize Marijuana” passed with 53.6% of the vote. At that time, Massachusetts joined seven other states, in addition to the District of Columbia, which legalized marijuana for adult-use (a.k.a., recreational use). That number has risen to 11 states as well as some territories. The resulting law, Chapter 334 of the Acts of 2016, *The Regulation and Taxation of Marijuana Act*, which was amended by Chapter 55 of the Acts of 2017, *An Act to Ensure Safe Access to Marijuana*, delegated to the Commission authority over the adult-use program. In September 2017, the Governor, Treasurer, and Attorney General appointed five Commissioners to serve in full-time positions. The Executive Director began in November 2017 and the agency is currently staffed by a total of 68 employees, including Commissioners and the Executive Director.

The mission of the Commission is to honor the will of the voters of Massachusetts by safely, equitably and effectively implementing and administering the laws enabling access to medical and adult use marijuana in the Commonwealth.

The Commission continues to foster the creation of a safely regulated industry that creates entrepreneurial and employment opportunities and incremental tax revenues in and to communities across the Commonwealth and already serves as a best practice model for other states. The Commission developed policies, procedures, and a regulatory structure to encourage and enable full participation in the marijuana industry by people from communities that were previously disproportionately harmed by marijuana prohibition and enforcement and positively impact those communities. The Commission has also built robust data collection methods to monitor and measure progress toward these statutory goals and objectives, most notably through an Open Data Platform. With these programs and regulations in place, the Commission continues to build an industry that prioritizes participation by small and large participants and with full and robust participation by people of color, women, and veterans.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF ADULT-USE & MEDICAL MARIJUANA PROGRAMS

### Law

Promulgation of the Adult-Use Regulations. On March 23, 2018, the first iteration of regulations, 935 CMR 500.000: *Adult Use of Marijuana*, were published in the Massachusetts Register. At the time of this report, the Commission is in the midst of a regulatory review phase where the experience garnered since the adult-use market came online will be implemented into the existing regulations. This regulatory review phase is anticipated to be completed before the start of the new calendar year and will be the Commission’s third round of regulatory review.

Promulgation of Medical-Use Regulations. On December 24, 2018, the Medical Marijuana Program was successfully transferred from the Department of Public Health to the Commission, as was mandated by Section 64 of the Act. In its current regulatory review phase



mentioned above, the Commission is also making updates to the Medical-Use Regulations.

Guidance. In addition to the regulations, the Commission regularly drafts and adopts guidance for licensing and other administrative processes implicated by its legislative mandate. To date, the Commission has issued over 20 guidance documents designed to assist consumers, patients, applicants, business owners, and local officials. Guidance documents are available at <https://mass-cannabis-control.com/guidancedocuments/>. The Commission will continue to issue guidance documents from time to time as matters arise in order to aid the public with navigating and complying with the various regulations.

## **Licensing & Enforcement**

Through the adult-use program, the Legislature required the Commission to certify priority applicants, license Marijuana Establishments, register marijuana agents and laboratory agents, and approve applicants for the Social Equity program. To that end, the Commission and its vendors designed and implemented Massachusetts Cannabis Industry Portal (MassCIP), its electronic registration system, and its electronic seed-to-sale tracking system, Metrc. As of January 2020, Medical Marijuana Treatment Center (MTC) application and licensing information also transitioned to an electronic-based process completed through MassCIP, further integrating the medical program that was previously governed by the Department of Public Health into the operations of the Commission.

Priority Applicants. Between April 17, 2018, and May 22, 2018, the Commission completed the application process for priority certification. In total, 322 applications were submitted, with 81 MTC (formerly referred to as RMD) applicants and 122 economic empowerment applicants ultimately granted priority certification. The Commission issued two commence operations approvals to economic empowerment priority applicants in March and May of 2020. The first Social Equity Program applicant received a commence operations approval in March of 2019. To date, 28 Social Equity Program applicants have secured at least a provisional license.

Provisional & Final Applicants. As of August 18, 2020, 22,832 applications for licensure as an adult-use Marijuana Establishment and for registration as a marijuana establishment and laboratory agent were opened with the Commission. More specifically, Commission staff are presently reviewing 250 applicants and further reviewing and inspecting 418 provisional licenses. The following is a summary breakdown of the 856 license applications submitted to the Commission as of July 29, 2020:

- 240 MTC Priority Applicants (which is a MTC previously approved by the Department of Public Health and had at least obtained a MTC provisional license as of April 1, 2018);
- 37 Economic Empowerment Applicants (as certified by the Commission in 2018);



- 52<sup>1</sup> Social Equity Participant Applicants (as approved through the Commission’s Social Equity Program);
- 110 Expedited Applicants (as allowed through Commission policy in November 2019 as part of a process for certain businesses to receive expedited review. These applicants consist of minority-, women-, and veteran-owned businesses as certified by the Supplier Diversity Office as well as Independent Testing Laboratories, Outdoor Cultivators, Marijuana Microbusinesses, and Craft Marijuana Cooperatives); and
- 417 General Applicants.

As of August 18, 2020, 135 licensees have received commence operations notices, meaning that they have been authorized by the Commission to begin business operations, 35 have been granted final licenses, and 418 have been granted provisional licenses.

In addition to regulating the adult-use industry, the Commission has overseen the medical-use program since being transferred from the Department of Public Health in December of 2018 as required pursuant to Chapter 55 of the Acts of 2017.

As of August 18, 2020, the medical-use industry currently is comprised of the following: 60 provisional licensees, 14 final licensees, and 64 additional licensees who have commenced full operations to serve registered patients and caregivers through vertically integrated medical marijuana treatment centers (MTCs). There are 21 medical-use license applicants under review for consideration by the Commission.

### Emergency Orders Related to Vaping and EVALI

During the period of July 1, 2019-July 1, 2020, the Commission issued three industry-wide emergency orders in response to reported occurrences of e-cigarette, or vaping, product use-associated lung injury (EVALI) in the Commonwealth and across the nation.

On November 12, 2019, the Commission issued a [Quarantine Order](#) Applying to Vaporizer Products requiring all licensees to quarantine all vaporizer products based on the agency’s determination that additional testing of products for Vitamin-E Acetate and other substances of concern was necessary to protect the public health, safety, and welfare.

On December 12, 2019, the Commission issued a [First Amended Quarantine Order](#) Applying to Vaporizer Products with Conditions authorizing licensees to sell newly manufactured vaporizer products, but requiring that vaporizer products manufactured before December 12, 2019 remain subject to quarantine. Approximately 619,362 individual units of

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of applications and licensing, this refers to the number of applications submitted by approved Social Equity Program participants who also demonstrate that their business is comprised of 10% or more equity of approved Social Equity Participants for all license types except delivery. For delivery applications, it refers to the number of applications submitted by approved participants who also demonstrate that their business is comprised of a majority equity held by approved Social Equity Participants.



vaporizer product were held in virtual quarantine as a result of the First Amended Quarantine Order.

On August 3, 2020, the Commission issued a [Second Amended Quarantine Order](#) Applying to Vaporizer Products providing several options for addressing quarantined products manufactured prior to December 12, 2019. The Second Amended Order permitted licensees to voluntarily dispose of vaporizer products, release vaporizer products from quarantine for sale if first retested, or repurpose quarantined vaporizer products into other Marijuana Products after reclaiming marijuana oil from the quarantined product. The Second Amended further required mandatory disposal for vaporizer products that had failed two rounds of Commission-initiated tests for heavy metals in connection with an investigation carried out by the Commission's Investigations and Enforcement Department during December 2019-March 2020.

## **Communications**

The Commission is in regular contact with members of the public through various formats and platforms. Beyond the monthly public meeting schedule, Commissioners regularly attend and present at public events. In the last year, Commissioners have made or participated in over 100 presentations or panel discussions before stakeholder groups that included community organizations, chambers of commerce, public health organizations, travel and tourism bureaus, attorneys, municipal officials, and law enforcement. Participation in related events continued virtually through the COVID-19 State of Emergency declared in Massachusetts in March.

The Commission's website ([www.MassCannabisControl.Com](http://www.MassCannabisControl.Com)), received more than 1,170,000 - page views and 882,000 unique visits throughout FY20. In addition to information on the Commission and the Cannabis Advisory Board, the site provides regular updates concerning Massachusetts law, regulations, guidance, and licensing. The Commission also oversees the Medical Use of Marijuana Program website ([www.Mass.Gov/MedicalMarijuana](http://www.Mass.Gov/MedicalMarijuana)). This fall, the agency expects to complete and launch a website redesign of [www.MassCannabisControl.Com](http://www.MassCannabisControl.Com) that will integrate the medical- and adult-use cannabis program's content to better serve all Commission constituents throughout the Commonwealth. New features of the website design will include unique user-driven experiences using color-coded wayfinding and a range of visitor personas (e.g. patients, government officials, and parents); integrated web copy for improved searchability; stronger web accessibility standards; and embedded data compiled from external resources such as the Commission's Open Data Platform, currently available at <https://opendata.mass-cannabis-control.com/>.

The Commission sent, on average, 11 email campaigns to subscribers per month, a 450 percent increase from the previous fiscal year. The Commission has expanded its social media presence to include Instagram (@CannabisControlCommission, 2,437 followers) and LinkedIn (@CannabisControlCommission, 1,932) in addition to Twitter (@MA\_Cannabis, 7,514 followers) and Facebook (@MassCCC, 2,391 followers). Through these various channels, the



Commission continues to communicate with the public regarding the work of the agency and the emerging industry.

### Public Awareness Campaign

The Commission continues to build upon its state-mandated public awareness campaign, More About Marijuana ([www.MoreAboutMJ.Org](http://www.MoreAboutMJ.Org)), pursuant to Section 51 of the Act. The campaign has been developed in partnership with MORE Advertising, and utilizes third-party research, surveys, and focus groups of Massachusetts residents to complete the implementation of new content.

Key focuses of the initial public awareness campaign included youth prevention and responsible adult-use consumption. Over FY20, More About Marijuana continued to promote those messages and incorporated new educational materials about the [dangers of home manufacturing](#), COVID-19 safety tips for cannabis consumers, and the risks of vaping, in response to statutory requirements and developing health emergencies over the last year. Animated home manufacturing content launched in the spring, followed by new COVID-19 safety ads published through social media, the Department of Transportation's billboard network, and community-based newspapers. An informational video about the risks of consuming illicit market vapes is expected to roll out this fall.

Overall, the Commission distributed its 2020 integrated communications plan utilizing broadcast media (tv and radio), out-of-home (billboards and transit posters), and digital (social media, search engine marketing, and display ads). Print collateral and branded outreach materials continue remain accessible to the public through the Massachusetts Health Promotion Clearinghouse (<https://massclearinghouse.ehs.state.ma.us/category/Cannabis.html>). In addition to two previously available "Guides to Marijuana in Massachusetts" for parents and consumers, the Clearinghouse now includes a "Guide to Growing and Making Marijuana Products in Massachusetts." The Commission also collaborated with the Department of Fire Services to advise and distribute their public awareness campaign on Fire Safety for Cannabis.

From April to June alone, the Commission's public awareness campaign generated more than 90,000 MoreAboutMJ.Org views, 552,695 campaign views, and 65,040 campaign ad clicks across content available on Facebook, Google, YouTube, Snapchat and Twitter.

The Commission's Communication's and Research departments also spearheaded the release and review of pre-campaign surveys that will inform future direct-to-youth campaign messaging that enhances the campaign's ongoing focus on the risks of underage consumption.

### **Equity Programming & Community Outreach**



The Commission has spent its outreach efforts in the last year with a focus on the evaluation of the first cohort of the nation's first statewide Social Equity Program (Program), the planning, promotion, and launch the second cohort of the Program. While this has been the main focus, it has not been the only. The Commission continues to build collaborative partnerships with communities, constituencies, and organizations throughout the Commonwealth in order to increase engagement with the Commission, particularly including communities disproportionately harmed by marijuana arrests and incarceration, and engage with people of color, women, veterans and farmers, in accordance with the state law and the Commission's mission statement.

Social Equity Program. The Program is designed to build a pathway into the cannabis industry for individuals disproportionately impacted by prohibition to enter the cannabis industry. The Program focuses on those most impacted by the War on Drugs, marijuana prohibition, disproportionate arrests and incarceration, and provides education and entry into the industry across four areas: entrepreneurship, entry- and managerial-level workforce and professional development, and ancillary business support. Its overall mission is to decrease the disparities in life outcomes for impacted individuals and improve the quality of life in areas of disproportionate impact.

The goals of the Program are to:

- Reduce barriers to entry in the commercial marijuana industry, regardless of desired specialty within the industry;
- Provide professional and technical services as well as mentoring for individuals and businesses facing systemic barriers; and
- Promote sustainable, socially, and economically reparative practices in the commercial marijuana industry in Massachusetts.

To qualify for the Program, an applicant must meet one of the following criteria:

- Residency in an area of disproportionate impact for at least 5 of the past 10 years and income may not exceed 400% of the Area Median Income in the applicant's respective town/city.
- Applicant has a past drug conviction, continuance without a finding, or an equivalent conviction in other jurisdictions, and residency in Massachusetts for at least the preceding 12 months; or
- Applicant has been married to or is the child of a person with a drug conviction, a continuance without a finding, or an equivalent conviction in other jurisdictions, and applicant residency in Massachusetts resident for at least the preceding 12 months.

The application for the Program's first cohort opened in December of 2018 with 143 participants. After a robust procurement and selection process, six vendors were chosen to participate in the Program's first cohort. The Commission launched the Program in the summer of 2019 by holding three exclusive orientation seminars across the Commonwealth for accepted applicants. The Program's first cohort completed programming in April of 2020. After reviewing



constituent, participant, and vendor feedback regarding the income limits under Qualification 1, the Commission decided to increase the income limit from 400% of the federal poverty level, to 400% of the Area Median Income in the applicant's respective town/city. Based on that change, Commission staff reviewed all applications that were not accepted into the first cohort for potential acceptance into the second cohort in addition to all new applications. The Program's second cohort was subsequently finalized at the beginning of July of 2020.

Participant and vendor feedback led to several additional changes to the Program for the second cohort. Namely, the Commission streamlined the programming, implemented a virtual learning management system, and decreased the number of Program vendors from six to three. While there was a reduction in vendors, the number of accepted participants in the second cohort was twice that of the first cohort (285) and all at a reduced cost, thanks in part to the new virtual environment. The Program's second cohort began in July of 2020 with an orientation seminar followed by an exclusive business valuation seminar with Chairman Steven Hoffman. Programming for the second cohort will continue through May 2021. The Commission anticipates opening the application for the third cohort of the Program in early 2021, following a reevaluation of the 29 currently designated Areas of Disproportionate Impact.

## **Constituent Services & Government Affairs**

The Commission handles inquiries from the public and ensures a timely response. Constituents may email, call, or write in with their opinions, questions, comments, and concerns. The Commission generally receives an average of 50-60 inquiries per day. The Director of Constituent Services liaises with other departments and staff to resolve constituent cases that require their review. Prior to the pandemic, staff also attended community meetings and events to ensure that people can speak directly with Commission representatives. Constituents generally have questions and comments regarding the medical marijuana program, compliance with marijuana laws, marijuana policy, the industry, marijuana establishments and related state laws. While the Commission cannot and does not provide legal or business guidance, the staff attempts to answer constituents' questions as completely as possible or refer them to the appropriate resources.

The Commission is also in regular contact with the Legislature, the Administration, and Executive departments on a variety of topics. Most often, legislative offices are in contact with the Commission on behalf of constituents. From time to time, however, the Commission will reach out to the Legislature to request insight and/or consideration of matters within the Legislature's purview (e.g. [Report on Host Community Agreements](#) and [Social Consumption](#)).

To further emphasize the importance of accessible and responsive government, the Commission assigned, as one of the Executive Director's 10 goals, an initial response time of 24 hours for all inquiries. To assist in meeting that objective, the Commission recently developed and deployed a robust case relationship management (CRM) system, explained in further detail below.

### Patient Support for Medical Use of Marijuana Program



On December 24, 2018, the Medical Use of Marijuana Program transferred from the Department of Public Health, and the program is now a fully integrated part of the Commission. Commission staff routinely responds to patient inquiries in addition to processing patient, provider, and caregiver registrations.

As of August 2020, the Medical Use of Marijuana Program is made up of 86,197 certified active patients, 7,815 active caregivers and 358 certifying health care providers. The Patient Support Center is comprised of three patient support representatives and one manager who ensure patients, caregivers, and providers are correctly registered and who troubleshoot technical issues as they arise.

Significant technical upgrades were made in FY20, the details of which can be found below. These changes also included a link to the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) database to facilitate automatic patient registrations, which has significantly reduced wait times, as well as the transition of the pediatric application process from paper to the MassCIP as a digital application.

## **Public Records and Transparency**

During FY20, the Commission's Records Access Officer received and responded to approximately 146 requests for public records. Although certain materials are withheld during the licensing and investigative process, the Commission's goal is to promote transparency. To that end, it regularly posts the following:

- Applicants That Have Submitted All Required Packets by City/Town and License Type which can be found at <https://mass-cannabis-control.com/document/total-number-of-license-applications-that-have-submitted-all-required-packets-by-city-town-and-license-type-as-of-september-10-2020-pdf/>.
- Segregated application information via Executive Summaries for those entities approved for provisional licensure, which can be found at <https://mass-cannabis-control.com/documents/>.

The Commission has posted to its website the applications of Marijuana Establishments that have commenced operations. Additionally, the Commission launched its Open Data Platform in order to provide readily available information to the public. The Open Data Platform can be located at <https://opendata.mass-cannabis-control.com/>. The Commission is continuing to explore technological solutions to increase the public's access to Commission records.

## **Finance**

The Commission is supported through the Marijuana Regulation Fund, which is subject to appropriation. In FY20, the Legislature appropriated \$14.2M across three line items for the



Commission's operations: \$9.9M for the Commission's Operations, \$3.3M for the Medical-Use of Marijuana Program, and \$1M for the Public Awareness Campaign stipulated by section 51 of chapter 55 of the acts of 2017. In total, the Commission spent \$12.6M in FY20. The Commission continues to grow, hire additional staff, and implement legislative mandates as the industry matures. That growth is demonstrated in the Commission's FY21 budget request.

The Commission's request to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means for FY 2021 is \$16.2 million in total. This includes \$12.4 million for the CNB Operations line item (1070-0840), which represents a \$2.8 million increase over the FY 2020 available funding of \$9.6 million. Beginning this fiscal year and continuing through FY 2021, the Commission plans to increase its staffing to improve the efficiency of the licensing process and anticipate the need for growth in compliance and enforcement as new, diverse establishments open in Massachusetts. This budget request will enable the Commission to complete a planned 34 FTE new hires. In combination with IT and operational enhancements, hiring more Investigators and Licensing Specialists will enable the Commission to process applications on a quicker timeline while also ensuring compliance with state law and adherence to our mission. With the funding in the FY 2021 proposal, the Commission would also implement both technical changes to streamline processing and improve the user experience and increase staffing to meet demand for licensing. These changes would support all licensing types, notably farmers, small businesses and cooperatives, laboratories, and outdoor cultivation, which are key areas of the Commission's statutory mandate. The Commission's request also includes \$1 million for the aforementioned Public Awareness Campaign (1070-0841). This funding level will ensure that we can continue our efforts to educate the public about the responsible use of adult-use marijuana through a multi-media campaign. In addition, the Commission requests \$2.8 million for the Medical Use of Marijuana Program (1070-0842), which will support the operations of this program, including serving more than 67,000 registered patients annually and ensuring the compliance of 58 operational medical marijuana treatment centers

## **Revenue**

The Commission's revenue from application, licensing, fines and other fees, along with marijuana sales and excise tax revenue, is deposited into the Marijuana Regulation Fund. The Commission collected \$17.1M in revenue in FY20. Through May 2020, the Massachusetts Department of Revenue reported a total of \$30M in marijuana sales tax revenue and \$51.7M in marijuana excise tax revenue for FY20. In total, these revenues have generated a \$98.8M contribution to the Marijuana Regulation Fund.

## **Personnel**

The Human Resources department is responsible for creating and implementing policies, processes and programs to support the Commissions' mission and strategic vision and creating a great place to work. The Commission has a strong commitment to attracting, rewarding, developing and retaining an inclusive, diverse, and talented workforce. At the time of this report,



the Commission employs 68 staff of which 61% are female and 39% persons of color. In addition, our management team is 60% female and 46% persons of color.

## **Technology**

The Commission's licensing platform, MassCIP, has managed the intake of applications, as well as the issuance of licenses. On November 20, 2018, the first Marijuana Retail stores opened. Both locations provided sales and marijuana tracking data to the Commission's seed-to-sale system, Metrc, which is closely coupled with the licensing platform. In addition, all functionality related to badging of registered agents has been implemented via MassCIP.

At the end of 2019, the Commission migrated to a new technology environment (@CCCMass.com) in the Microsoft Government Cloud. This migration laid the foundation for a fully remote workforce that was monumental when faced with the COVID-19 pandemic. Commission operations were 100% stable with all employees and the patient support center working remotely immediately and seamlessly following the Executive Director's work-from-home notice in March 2020. This technology also improved the Commission's ability to strengthen security through Palo Alto artificial intelligence (AI) security platforms, advanced threat protection, and always on virtual private networks (VPN). The Commission's technology staff continues to address the needs of the organization by enhancing the network technology and standardizing desktop and laptop computers, desk, and cell phones.

The technology team assisted in the successful build-out of the Commission's headquarters at Union Station in Worcester and the satellite office in Boston. Both offices are situated with best-in-class technology to enable employees to be productive regardless of their location. In the Boston office, technology was implemented to allow for bookable offices for mobile employees, and conference room technology that enabled face to face meetings regardless of the participant's location.

In January 2020, the Commission migrated the Patient Portal to a new Amazon AWS Government cloud-hosted solution that enables faster software changes, enhanced auto approvals, and the integration with the RMV. The system is now integrated into the same environment as MassCIP; a step that will drive the consolidation of the two systems in the future. This migration assisted in reducing the cycle time for a patient to receive their medical identification card and also allowed for the introduction of an electronic application for pediatric applicants for the first time in program history.

The Commission continues to expand data on our Business Intelligence and Open Data technology that supports operational insight and transparency related to (1) marijuana establishment licenses and (2) marijuana establishment agent registrations. The portal has been deployed to the public under <https://opendata.mass-cannabis-control.com/>.

Lastly, the Commission has implemented a CRM system that allows for a single source record of operations across the Commission. The system, using the Microsoft Dynamics 365 platform, is a case management platform that supports various work streams



such as constituent services, patient support, legal case management, contract management, investigations, licensing workflow, suitability reviews, IT ticketing, HR, enforcement, and public records requests. While development is complete, adoption continues through various departments throughout this year.

## Research

Section 17(a) of the Act requires the Commission to develop a research agenda to better understand the social and economic trends of cannabis in the Commonwealth. The law identifies at least seven categories of study and authorizes an expansion of that scope with the aim of informing future decisions that would aid in the closure of the illicit marketplace and monitoring the public health impacts of cannabis and cannabis legalization.

The Commission's Research Department stratifies categories of study into separate reports. Between July 1, 2019- July 1, 2020, the Commission released five of these comprehensive research reports (Table 1 below). All reports include original data analysis and extensive state-of-science literature reviews. The aims of each research report are fourfold: (1) establish a baseline prior to adult-use cannabis legalization to provide a point of reference for future years; (2) assess gaps in systematic data collection in the Commonwealth that is needed to fulfill the statutorily required annual research mandate, (3) discuss strategic plans for upcoming reports, and (4) present considerations for the Commonwealth based on a comprehensive assessment of items included in each report and as outlined in the Act. [See Table 1 below for c. 55(2017), § 17(a) research agenda items assessed and descriptions of each report].

Additionally, work is underway to conduct a baseline assessment of impacts to the healthcare system, an assessment of adult-use cannabis behaviors, an assessment of the utility in using public safety data to assess social equity provisions, an assessment of legal and illicit market cannabis use behaviors, an assessment of cannabis-related disciplinary actions in schools, as well as continuing the primary collected surveys included in the Marijuana Baseline Health Study (MBHS). These agenda items will be included in the 2020-2022 reports, scientific manuscripts and national scientific meeting presentations.

The Research Department continues to work internally, as well as collaborate with various state agencies, academic researchers, and other research entities and stakeholders to employ primary and secondary data collection methods to examine a spectrum of items. As cannabis policy research gains interest nationwide across diverse stakeholders and academic disciplines, the Commission set both long- and short-term goals to ensure the research is of high quality, impactful, comprehensive, and collaborative. Thus, in addition to Research Reports, the Commission's Research Department has published two academic peer-review manuscripts (see Table 2 below) and presented Commission research at two National Scientific Meetings (see Table 3 below).

### Commission Research

**Table 1. Commission Research Reports, July 1, 2019-July 1, 2020**



<b>Linked Commission Research Reports and c.55 Agenda items assessed</b>	<b>Description of Report</b>
<p><a href="#"><u><i>A Baseline Review and Assessment of Cannabis Use and Youth: Literature Review and Preliminary Data in Massachusetts.</i></u></a> [c. 55(2017), § 17(a)(i); c. 55(2017), § 17(a)(ii); c. 55(2017), § 17(a)(vi); c. 55(2017), § 17(b)]</p>	<p>Included a(n): (1) Assessment of youth cannabis use behaviors and risk/protective factors associated with cannabis use behaviors from 2007-2017 in the Commonwealth using the Youth Risk Behavioral Surveillance System, (YRBS); (2) Review of the literature on youth cannabis use behaviors and associated topics; (3) Public health framework, (4) Prevention framework; and ending with (5) Policy Considerations for the Commonwealth to consider.</p>
<p><a href="#"><u><i>Special Report: A Baseline Review and Assessment of the Massachusetts Cannabis Industry's Required Positive Impact Plans.</i></u></a></p>	<p>Assessed the first full year of Positive Impact Plans (PIPs) submitted to the Commission and associated data, including: Key Stakeholder Interviews with Commissioners and Social Equity Program (SEP) applicant applications and survey data, and ending with Policy Considerations for the Commonwealth to consider.</p>
<p><a href="#"><u><i>Special Report: Evaluation the Impact of Cannabis Legalization in Massachusetts: State of the Data.</i></u></a></p>	<p>Comprehensively assessed the available datasets in Massachusetts to help the Department isolate resources to fulfill the robust research agenda enumerated in c. 55(2017), § 17(a), including Considerations for research in following years and specific dataset procurements requiring Institutional Review Board review.</p>
<p><a href="#"><u><i>A Preliminary Assessment of the Massachusetts Cannabis Industry: Literature Review and Preliminary Data in Massachusetts.</i></u></a> [c. 55(2017), § 17(a)(iv); c. 55(2017), § 17(a)(v); c. 55(2017), § 17(b)]</p>	<p>Included preliminary insight into the first year of the Massachusetts Cannabis Industry and state of the science in regard to early legal cannabis markets (first 12 months).</p>
<p><a href="#"><u><i>Massachusetts Public Awareness Campaign, More About Marijuana Effectiveness: Summary and Effectiveness</i></u></a> [c. 55(2017), § 17(a)(i)]</p>	<p>Assesses the Massachusetts #MoreAboutMJ Public Awareness Campaign (“Campaign”), scientific impetus, and assess effectiveness using data from the Campaign, which include focus groups and pre-and-post Campaign implementation surveys.</p>

**Table 2. Commission Research Scientific Publications, July 1, 2019-July 1, 2020**



<b>Commission Research Scientific Publications</b>
<b>Johnson JK, Doonan S.</b> Building Evidence-Based Prevention Mechanisms into Cannabis Legalization Policy and Regulations. Invited Guest Commentary. American Journal of Public Health (APHA). Published August 7, 2019.
Geissler KH, Kaizer K, <b>Johnson JK</b> , Doonan SD, Whitehill JM. Evaluation of Availability of Survey Data about Cannabis Use. The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Open Network, Published June 10, 2020. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.6039

**Table 3. Commission Research Presented at National Scientific Meetings, July 1, 2019-July 1, 2020**

<b>Presentations at National Scientific Meetings</b>
Geissler KH, Evans EA, <b>Johnson JK</b> , Whitehill. Utility of Survey and Administrative Data for Understanding Health Impacts of Policy Changes Related to Substance Use. JM. American Public Health Association Annual 2019 Meeting and Expo. Poster Presentation.
<b>Doonan SM., Johnson JK.</b> Risk and Protective Factors Associated with Cannabis Use in Massachusetts Use. American Psychopathological Association (APPA). March 2020. <a href="#">Poster Presentation</a> .

## Office Space

In 2019, the Commission, through the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM), moved to its headquarters in Worcester and a satellite office in downtown Boston to accommodate both the medical-use and adult-use programs. Also, in 2019, and as previously outlined, the Commission invested in computer hardware and transitioned off the Mass.gov backbone to an independent, secure system which enabled the Commission’s COVID-19 response. In March 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission closed its offices to staff and the public and began an agency-wide remote work initiative.

## COVID-19 Response

On March 12, 2020, the Executive Director closed the Commission’s offices to staff and the public and directed all staff to work from home. Thanks to the aforementioned investments in IT and equipment, Commissioners and staff have been working remotely since March 13, 2020. During this time, the Commission continued to implement its spending and hiring plans, including welcoming eight new hires while working remotely. To maintain medical marijuana operations, the Executive Director issued administrative orders to permit curbside pick-up and telehealth visits with certifying providers. Investigative and compliance staff started virtual inspections and visits to continue with the Commission’s licensing and compliance responsibilities. Public meetings continued online, consistent and compliant with the Governor’s executive order relative to the Open Meeting Law, including a public hearing on revisions to the adult-use and medical marijuana regulations. The Commission also created a [web page specific](#)



[to COVID-19 updates](#) and actions taken by the Commission in order to keep the public informed. The Commission continues to receive, review, and process all license applications; in fact, in 2020, the Commission saw its highest number of provisional and final licensing applications.

## **CONCLUSION**

This 3<sup>rd</sup> annual report identifies the operational activities of the Commission in the third year since establishment as well as the ongoing operational needs implicated by the continued build out of the industry, both medical- and adult-use. As the report demonstrates, the Commission has anticipated needs, created significant efficiencies, and continues to meet statutory requirements.

