

July 5, 2023

The Honorable Karen E. Spilka
Senate President
State House, Room 332
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Ronald Mariano
Speaker of the House
State House, Room 356
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Senate President Spilka and Speaker Mariano:

On behalf of the Cannabis Control Commission (Commission), I write today regarding the Commission's unanimous vote at their June public meeting to support the following policy statement relative to increasing Veterans' access to the Commonwealth's Medical Use of Marijuana Program:

The Cannabis Control Commission supports expanding the definition of "Qualifying patient" to include a veteran receiving their health care at a federal Veterans Administration facility who provides documentation that the Veterans Administration has diagnosed the veteran with an existing debilitating medical condition to the Commission. In addition, the Commission also supports the definition of "Debilitating medical condition" to be modified to include post-traumatic stress disorder and opioid use disorder.

The Commission understands the importance of providing adequate medical care and support to those who have served in the United States Armed Forces. To that end, the Commission respectfully recommends expanding the Commonwealth's definitions of debilitating medical conditions as this will enhance veterans' access to medical marijuana and play a pivotal role in ensuring they receive the care they deserve. Under current statutory definitions and programmatic schemes, Veterans who suffer from debilitating conditions resulting from their service may have difficulty obtaining medical marijuana.

Current law requires patients to be certified by a Certifying Healthcare Provider prior to registering for the Medical Use of Marijuana Program. Although, after the Medical Use of Marijuana Program transferred to the jurisdiction of the Commission, the agency stopped charging Massachusetts residents to register with the Commonwealth as patients, the ongoing cost to receive an initial certification from a registered provider is not covered by medical insurance and can be prohibitively expensive. A change in statute to allow veterans to use their diagnosis of a debilitating medical condition from the United States Department of Veterans



Affairs to register for the Medical Use of Marijuana Program would streamline the process for veterans to receive the medicine they need.

By prioritizing veterans' well-being and granting them access to alternative treatment options, the Commonwealth can lead the way in supporting those who have bravely served our country and equipping them with the tools to manage their ongoing health conditions. We look forward to our continued collaboration with the Legislature and appreciate the efforts of the Senate and House to work on measures to ensure all Massachusetts residents have proper access to medical marijuana.

If you have questions or would like to further discuss this important topic, please do not hesitate to contact us directly. The Commission's Director of Government Affairs and Policy, Matt Giancola, can be reached at Matt.Giancola@CCCMass.com or by phone at (774) 415-0462 to coordinate schedules. Thank you again for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shawn Collins", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Shawn Collins
Executive Director

Cc:

Joint Committee on Cannabis Policy
Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs
Secretary of the Executive Office of Veterans' Services

