

Thursday, May 21, 2026

The Honorable Joseph Solomon, Jr.
Chairman, House Corporations Committee
Rhode Island House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H8544 – An Act Relating to Food and Drugs – The Rhode Island Cannabis Act

Dear Chairman Solomon,

The Cannabis Control Commission submits this letter in support for H8544 – An Act Relating to Food and Drugs – The Rhode Island Cannabis Act. H8544 proposes targeted amendments to portions of the Rhode Island Cannabis Act following the April 8, 2026 federal court order enjoining the Commission’s adult-use retail licensing process.

The legislation seeks to clarify and refine certain statutory provisions while preserving core components of Rhode Island’s regulated cannabis framework, including the State’s commitment to social equity and safe, regulated market implementation.

Among other changes, the legislation removes the current partial residency requirement contained within portions of the Cannabis Act, revises social equity eligibility criteria, and eliminates references to disproportionately impacted areas within the statute. The bill retains social equity eligibility pathways for individuals and families directly impacted by prior cannabis-related criminal enforcement, including individuals previously arrested, convicted, or adjudicated delinquent for cannabis offenses that have since been decriminalized in Rhode Island.

The Commission notes that the recent Social Equity Applicant Status Certification process demonstrated that a substantial majority of approved applicants qualified under the criterion that remains preserved within the proposed legislation. According to Commission data, approximately 80% of approved social equity applicants were certified based upon prior cannabis-related criminal justice involvement or impacted family status, thereby establishing direct impact from the enforcement of prior cannabis activity that has since been legalized under the Cannabis Act.

The Commission believes that the legislation would also facilitate restarting the social equity applicant certification and adult-use retail license application processes under the amended statutory provisions, as the prior processes carried out under the current version of the Cannabis Act were enjoined by the federal court. In addition, the bill would allow the Commission to proceed using severable and non-conflicting portions of existing regulations while additional regulatory review and implementation efforts continue.

The Commission believes these amendments will provide additional statutory clarity and administrative direction from the General Assembly. The Commission believes that the bill may also



assist in supporting continuity, regulatory consistency, and operational efficiency within Rhode Island's adult-use cannabis program.

The Commission remains committed to implementing a cannabis regulatory framework grounded in public health, safety, transparency, equity, and accountability. Because litigation related to the adult-use retail licensing process remains ongoing, the Commission's comments are limited to the operational and administrative implications of the proposed legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michelle A. Reddish, MS, MPH
Cannabis Office Administrator

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Corporations
The Honorable Scott Slater
Danica Iacoi, Chief of Staff
Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy