

North Carolina Advisory Council on Cannabis

Co-Chairs:

Lawrence H. Greenblatt, State Health Director and Chief Medical Officer, NCDHHS

Matt Scott, District Attorney, Prosecutorial District 20

Meeting Minutes

September 30, 2025, 2:00-5:00pm

Virtual: WebEx and YouTube

Attendees

Council Members Present – David W. Alexander; Arthur E. Apolinario; Joshua C. Batten; John R. Bell; Carrie L. Brown; Patrick Brown; Mark M. Ezzell; Kris Gardner; Lawrence H. Greenblatt; Brian Harris; Zack A. Hawkins; Daniel Hirschman; Freddy L. Johnson, Jr.; Michael Lamb; Kimberly McDonald; Anca Grozav; Patrick Oglesby; Forrest G. Parker; Lillie L. Rhodes; Matt Scott; Gary H. Sikes; Keith Stone; Deonte Thomas; Missy P. Welch

Council Members Absent - Bill P. Rabon; Kandie D. Smith; Joy Strickland

Guest Speaker – Cameron Coleman, MD, Chief of Addiction Services, Avance Psychiatry

Agenda

- I. Welcome
- II. Roll Call
- III. Vote to Approve July 2025 Minutes
- IV. Conflict of Interest Reminder
- V. Review of Council Responsibilities and Timeline
- VI. Summary of July 2025 Meeting
- VII. Presentation
- VIII. Introduction of Council Subcommittees
- IX. Updates from Council Members
- X. Next Steps

Presentation – Top 10 Questions: Cannabis and Health

1. People have been using cannabis for a long time. What's changed?
 - Cannabis use is at an all time high. (Historic highs in 2023.)
 - Adolescents are using more and perceiving it as less harmful.
 - Potency is up from 2% in 1970s to 15-30% in 2025.
 - Concentrated products available with 50-80% THC.
2. What happens when people use cannabis?
 - Desired: euphoria, relaxation, increased appetite, relief from anxiety
 - Undesired: cognitive/memory issues, increased heart rate, nausea
 - Adverse: severe anxiety, paranoia, psychosis, hallucinations
 - Cannabis-Induced Psychosis
 - Increasing traffic fatalities
 - Cannabis-related emergency dept. visits increasing, especially among older adults and adolescents
3. What happens when people *stop* using cannabis?
 - Psychological and physical symptoms of withdrawal
 - Cannabis detox takes one month for a full system reset
4. Are there any medical benefits to using cannabis?

- FDA Approval: chemo-induced nausea/vomiting, appetite stimulation in HIV, certain seizure disorders
- No FDA Approval, but beneficial evidence: muscle spasticity in Multiple Sclerosis, chronic neuropathic pain
- Conflicting evidence: reduce opioids in chronic pain, short-term sleep problem relief in select patients with Fibromyalgia, sleep apnea, or chronic pain
- Weak or no evidence: Glaucoma, IBS, Depression, general insomnia, Tourette's

5. What do we know about cannabis and chronic pain?
 - Chronic, non-cancer pain can be reduced 30-50% by cannabinoids
 - More evidence of benefit in neuropathic pain, less in other types of pain
 - Mild to moderate side effects are common
 - Generally a 2nd to 3rd treatment option
 - Patients may develop tolerance
 - Research supports THC in some cases with potency up to 10% but not higher
 - Inhaled cannabis is not recommended
 - Risks outweigh benefits: adolescents, young adults, history of addiction, history of psychiatric illness, elderly, frail, risk of falling
6. How does cannabis affect sleep?
 - Limited research
 - Short term use may help, but long term use leads to worse sleep
7. How does cannabis affect the body?
 - Multiple organ systems: cardiovascular risk, respiratory risk, men's health issues (fertility risk), low quality evidence for increased cancer risk
 - Cannabis Hyperemesis Syndrome
 - Ample evidence of harms in pregnancy
8. How does cannabis affect the brain?
 - THC disrupts adolescent brain development
 - Frequent and heavy use = decline in IQ
 - Cognitive impairment in adults but they seem to resolve with abstinence over time
 - Increased risk of psychosis and schizophrenia over time
9. How does cannabis affect mental health?
 - Psychiatric patients are more likely to use cannabis, tend to use higher amounts, and more likely to become addicted
 - Can worsen depression
 - Can increase suicidal ideation in adolescents
 - Mixed findings for PTSD; not recommended for ADHD
10. Is cannabis addictive?
 - Overall risk for Cannabis Use Disorder is 10-20%
 - Risk is higher with daily use
 - Chart showing that addiction potential for **daily cannabis users** is less than tobacco but higher than cocaine, stimulants, analgesics, psychedelics and heroin
 - Treatment for CUD is more limited than for alcohol, tobacco and opioids

Introduction of Council Subcommittees

Phase 1 Subcommittees

Subcommittee	Potential Areas of Consideration	Potential Members
Consumer Safety & Youth Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Packaging and labeling Potency and flavor limits Purity standards Product types and forms Testing requirements Age restrictions Advertising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kris Gardner Arthur Apolinario Sen. Bill Rabon Keith Stone Larry Greenblatt Daniel Hirschman Joy Strickland Josh Batten Freddy Johnson Rep. Zack Hawkins
Prevention & Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treatment models Public education campaigns Data and public health surveillance needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carrie Brown Kimberly McDonald Brian Harris Lillie Rhodes Deonte' Thomas Mark Ezzell Michael Lamb Sen. Kandie Smith
Market Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vertical integration vs segmented model Licensee selection method Number of licenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forrest Parker Patrick Brown Gary Sikes David Alexander Rep. John Bell Missy Welch Patrick Oglesby Anca Grozav Matt Scott

Phase 2 Subcommittees

Subcommittee	Potential Areas of Consideration	Potential Members
Regulatory Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defining regulatory structure Staffing and resource needs Inspections, violations and penalties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missy Welch Kris Gardner Rep. John Bell Sen. Bill Rabon Joy Strickland Daniel Hirschman Matt Scott Forrest Parker Patrick Brown
Enforcement & Criminal Justice Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expungement Enforcement of laws against impaired driving Additional tools for law enforcement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deonte' Thomas Carrie Brown Michael Lamb Mark Ezzell Freddy Johnson Kimberly McDonald Keith Stone Sen. Kandie Smith Brian Harris Gary Sikes Josh Batten
Revenue & Federal Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal law compliance Tax structure Revenue plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patrick Oglesby Anca Grozav Rep. Zack Hawkins Lillie Rhodes Larry Greenblatt Arthur Apolinario David Alexander

Updates from Council Members

Forrest Parker, General Manager of Great Smoky Cannabis Company, invited council members to tour his cannabis dispensary in Cherokee, NC. Rep. John Bell, President of Asterra Labs, also invited council members to tour his production facility.

Adjournment

Meeting concluded at 3:50 PM.

Next Meeting Date: Tuesday, November 18, 2025