

Cannabis Control Commission

2025 Annual Agency Report

Rhode Island Cannabis Control Commission

Kimberly Ahern, Chairperson

Robert Jacquard, Commissioner

Layi Oduyingbo, Commissioner

Michelle Reddish, Cannabis Office Administrator

Letter from the Chair

Dear Governor McKee, Attorney General Neronha, Treasurer Diossa, Speaker Shekarchi, and President Lawson,

On behalf of the Cannabis Control Commission, we are pleased to submit our comprehensive Annual Agency Report, covering the Commission's activities for Fiscal Year 2025 in accordance with R.I. Gen. Laws § 21-28.11-5(d)(1). This report demonstrates the Commission's hard work and commitment to building and regulating a safe, transparent, and equitable cannabis market in Rhode Island.

Since its establishment, the Commission has worked diligently to implement the Rhode Island Cannabis Act. Over the past fiscal year, we finalized comprehensive regulations, hired key staff to fully operationalize the agency, launched the Social Equity Applicant Status Certification (SEASC) portal, and opened the Adult-Use Retail Application Portal. These milestones, along with others highlighted in the report, represent significant progress toward a well-regulated market that protects public health and safety while expanding opportunity.

The pages that follow provide an overview of the Commission's mission and vision, the governance structure established by statute, and a year-in-review that details key accomplishments. The report also presents data on licensing and industry activity, outlines our compliance and enforcement efforts, and reflects on the public health regulations that serve as cornerstones of our work.

As we look ahead, the Commission remains focused on safety, transparency, and equity. We will continue to strengthen our programs and processes to ensure that Rhode Island's cannabis industry develops responsibly and sustainably in the years to come.

We extend our gratitude to the Governor, General Assembly, and state partners for their continued support, and to the communities, advocates, and stakeholders who engage with us in this important work. This was an exciting year for the Commission as it became its own stand-alone agency, and we are thrilled to share about it in this report.

Sincerely,



Kimberly Ahern, Chair
Rhode Island Cannabis Control Commission

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Introduction

Cannabis Control Commission

The Cannabis Control Commission (“CCC” or “Commission”) is an independent state agency established by the Rhode Island Cannabis Act of 2022 (R.I. Gen. Laws § 21-28.11-1 et seq.). Governor Dan McKee signed the Act into law on May 25, 2022, emphasizing its focus on equity, safety, and the automatic expungement of past cannabis convictions. Governor McKee nominated three Commissioners, Chair Kim Ahern, Commissioner Robert Jacquard, and Commission Layi Oduyingbo, on May 17, 2023. The Senate Judiciary Committee reviewed the nominations on June 6, and the full Senate confirmed them on June 13, 2023.

The Commission is charged with regulating, licensing, enforcing, and overseeing adult-use and medical cannabis in Rhode Island (R.I. Gen. Laws § 21-28.11-2). As an independent agency (R.I. Gen. Laws § 21-28.11-4(j)), the CCC has now transitioned to full regulatory authority following the finalization of its regulations. Oversight of the Medical Marijuana Act (R.I. Gen. Laws § 21-28.6-1 et seq.) has officially transferred from existing agencies to the CCC, which may delegate certain functions to the Cannabis Office (R.I. Gen. Laws § 21-28.11-10.1(g)(1)).

Cannabis Office:

The Cannabis Office, under the Cannabis Control Commission, was created to support the implementation, administration, and enforcement of the state’s cannabis laws (R.I. Gen. Laws § 21-28.11-18.1). As outlined in the Rhode Island Cannabis Act, the Cannabis Office carries out day-to-day regulatory operations, including compliance, education, and enforcement for both adult-use and medical cannabis. With the Commission's regulations now finalized, the Cannabis Office has assumed responsibilities previously managed by other state agencies, ensuring a smooth transition and consistent oversight across the cannabis industry.

Mission

To govern Rhode Island's adult-use, medical cannabis, and hemp industry by licensing businesses, providing education and guidance, ensuring compliance, promoting equitable access, and fostering sustainable economic opportunity while maintaining balance and protecting public health and safety.

Vision

To foster a well-regulated, innovative, and inclusive cannabis and hemp industry that protects public health, advances equity, and creates meaningful opportunities for individuals, businesses, and communities across Rhode Island.

Commission Pillars

- Safety
- Transparency
- Equity

Year in Review

Regulatory

In 2025, the Commission advanced its regulatory framework by conducting the Administrative Procedures Act (APA) process, which included hosting a public hearing and carefully reviewing 381 public comments. These contributions informed the final regulations, encompassing 180 pages of regulatory language, that officially established the Commission as a standalone state agency on May 1, 2025. This was a critical milestone for the agency, making it a permanent regulator, equipped with the authority to oversee Rhode Island’s evolving cannabis industry.

The Commission’s accomplishments in 2025 were possible because of the formative building blocks in 2024. The Commission hired key staff, including a nationwide search for the first ever Cannabis Office Administrator, to effectuate the mandates in the Cannabis Act. The Cannabis Advisory (“CAB”) and its five subcommittees convened monthly to provide recommendations on regulatory decision points including cannabis packaging and labeling, uses of the Social Equity Assistance Fund, and determining Rhode Island’s disproportionately impacted areas.

Legislative

The Commission remained actively engaged with the legislative process, tracking 30 bills with potential implications for cannabis, hemp, and public health policy in Rhode Island.

A significant outcome of the legislative session was the passage of S0984A and H6270A, which formally direct the Commission to provide the General Assembly with recommendations on regulating and licensing the growing, manufacturing, distribution and retail sale of hemp and hemp-derived products including hemp-derived beverages.

Additionally, the Fiscal Year 2026 state budget (Article 3, Section 1) brought a major structural change by transferring regulatory authority of hemp and hemp-derived products from the Department of Business Regulation to the Commission. This expansion of oversight broadens the Commission’s regulatory portfolio beyond adult-use cannabis to include:

- Growing, production, distribution, and sale of hemp and hemp-derived products
- Licensing and enforcement mechanisms
- Public health and consumer protection standards

Enforcement

The Commission takes its responsibility to uphold the Rhode Island Cannabis Act very seriously. In addition to its regulatory and oversight functions, the Commission has begun exercising its adjudicatory role, ensuring that compliance matters are handled with fairness, transparency, and integrity.

In its official capacity as a standalone agency, the Commission is dedicated to making decisive and swift action when a violation is identified. In one instance, this included the revocation of a cultivator

license following a comprehensive investigation by the Cannabis Office. This action demonstrates the Commission's willingness to use the full scope of its authority when necessary to enforce the Cannabis Act and uphold accountability.

Equity & Public Engagement

In alignment with its mandate to advance equity, the Commission launched a Social Equity Technical Assistance Program, which included three public forums to explain the Social Equity Program and Social Equity Applicant Status Certification.

To further strengthen access and participation, the Commission also launched the Social Equity Applicant Status Certification application portal, providing a transparent and streamlined process for applicants seeking recognition under the program. We received around 220 interested parties and are currently reviewing submissions.

Social Equity Applicant Status Certification

Anchored in the Rhode Island Cannabis Act, the Social Equity Program is a landmark provision that recognizes that the enforcement of cannabis-related laws has caused deep and lasting harm, disproportionately affecting certain individuals, families, and communities. The General Assembly found that those who were arrested or incarcerated for cannabis offenses, along with their families, continue to experience negative consequences long after their involvement with the legal system, including diminished access to employment, housing, business opportunities, health resources, and overall financial security.

In light of these findings, the General Assembly emphasized the need for intentional efforts to reduce barriers and promote equity within the cannabis industry. Establishing the Social Equity Program is a means to provide opportunities for those who were harmed to participate in Rhode Island's growing industry.

The first step in the Social Equity Program was to launch the Social Equity Applicant Status Certification process. This certification process, a requirement in the Commission's governing statute and regulations, is the mechanism for individuals to demonstrate they meet the definition of "social equity applicant," as defined in the Cannabis Act. Applying for certification is a prerequisite for those seeking one of the six reserved Social Equity Retail Licenses.

In July 2025, the Commission contracted with Creative Services, Inc. (CSI) as a partner throughout the certification phase. CSI was selected through a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process, and has been managing a secure, user-friendly certification portal, providing applicant support, reviewing eligibility, and maintaining tracking and reporting tools. The portal was developed to reduce unnecessary burdens on applicants while ensuring rigorous standards of review. The certification portal launched in August 2025 and will close by the end of September 2025. The Commission will then certify Approved Social Equity Applicants who may then proceed in the Social Equity License process.

Throughout 2025, CCC staff conducted external workshops throughout the state in Pawtucket, Newport, and Central Falls. These were part of the Commission's mission to provide technical assistance to social equity applicants throughout the certification and licensing process. In addition to the public workshops, staff created narrated modules in preparation for Social Equity Applicant Status Certification, outlining program details, governance structures, and detailed explanations on how to meet the criteria of a social equity applicant. These comprehensive videos were accompanied by supplemental materials for additional assistance and hosted on the Commission's dedicated website tab for the Social Equity Program.

Adult-Use Cannabis Retail Expansion

Pursuant to R.I. Gen Laws § 21-28.11-10.2, the Commission is authorized to license up to 24 new retail-only establishments statewide, divided equally across six geographic zones. The Cannabis Control Commission made history on September 12, 2025, as adult-use cannabis retail license applications opened, officially marking the beginning of the largest expansion to Rhode Island's cannabis industry.

The retail license applications will be for the three authorized license types: General Retail Licenses, Workers' Cooperative Retail Licenses, and Social Equity Retail Licenses. The Cannabis Office worked diligently to facilitate the opening of the Adult-Use Retail License portal, which will remain open until December 29, 2025. Applications will be reviewed to ensure full compliance with the Commission's comprehensive regulations released earlier this year. Following a thorough review, qualified applicants will move onto a random selection process, if necessary, which will be announced in 2026.

Medical Cannabis Program

The Cannabis Control Commission remains committed to Rhode Island's medical marijuana community and ensuring continued patient access to safe and reliable products. One significant update to the medical program this year, as required by the Cannabis Act, mandated that the Commission require patients with out-of-state medical marijuana cards to also possess and produce a valid government issued identification demonstrating residency in the same state jurisdiction that issued the medical marijuana card. *See* R.I. Gen. Laws §21-28.11-5(b)(33).

While much of the Commission's recent work has centered on adult-use expansion, we continue to work closely with our partners at the Rhode Island Department of Health on patient and authorized purchaser registration. The Commission recognizes the medical program as the foundation of the state's cannabis marketplace and a vital source of access to treatment for Rhode Islanders. As such, the Commission will continue to focus on patient needs and concerns, ensuring that as the adult-use market expands, medical cannabis patients remain supported with consistent access, high-quality products, and thoughtful policies that recognize the unique role of the medical program.

Cannabis Licensing Data

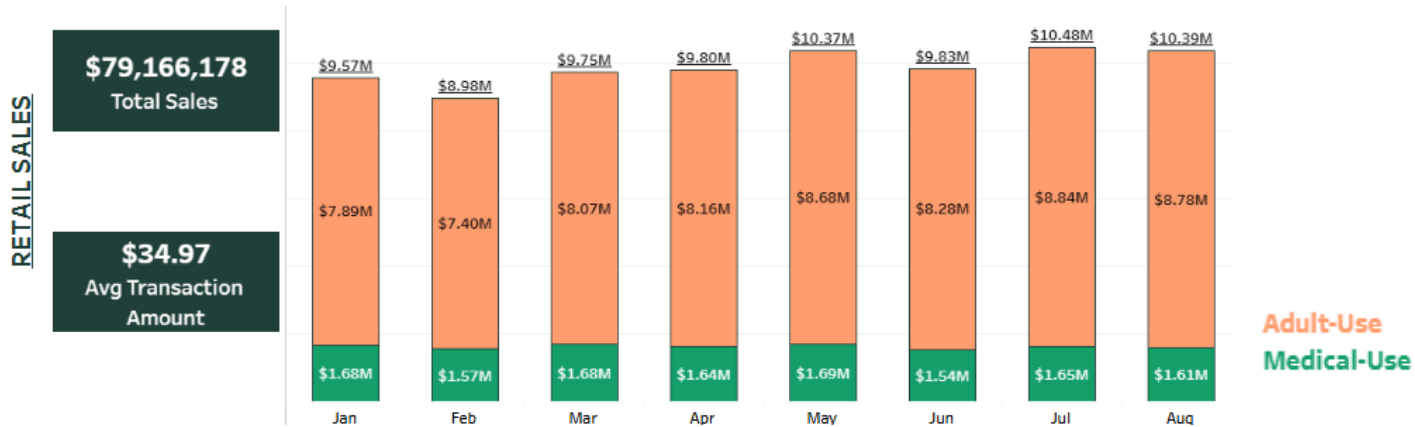
Licensed Compassion Centers/Hybrid Cannabis Retailers	7
Unissued Compassion Center Licenses	One license pending in Zone 1: Variance Application Window (closed September 18, 2025 and application under review) One license pending in Zone 3: Administrative Process (deadline to complete licensure requirements October 21, 2025)
Licensed Cultivators	57
Licensed Adult-Use Cannabis Retailers	24 licenses becoming available in 2026

Hemp Licensing Data

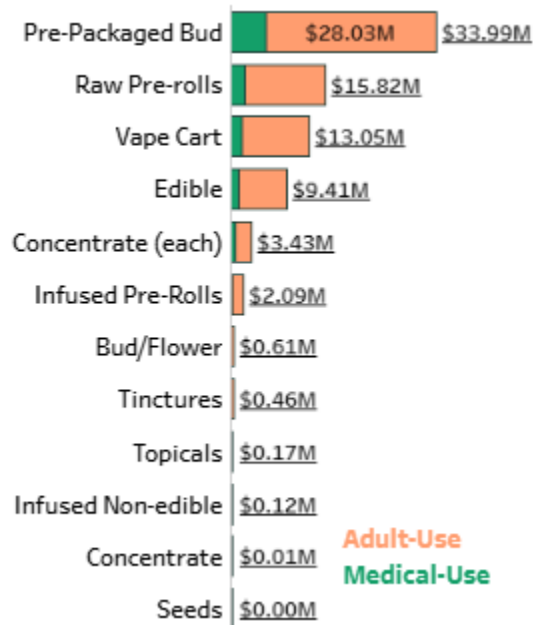
Hemp Growers/Handlers	9
Hemp Distributors	18
Hemp Retailers	159

Year-to-Date Sales

Cannabis Retail Sales 2025 (Adult-Use and Medical Cannabis)



Sales by Product Category



Cannabis Wholesale Transfers

"Wholesale Transfers" are affiliated or unaffiliated transfers shipped from a cultivator and received by a compassion center or another cultivator.

"Affiliated transfers" means the transfer of cannabis products in vertically integrated licensed Compassion Centers (licensed cannabis retail operations with their own licensed cannabis cultivations). Affiliated transfers do not typically have costs associated with them.

"Unaffiliated transfers" means products sold from one licensed facility to another. For example, Cultivator to Compassion Center or Cultivator to Cultivator.



Looking Ahead

Cannabis License Expansion

In the coming year, the Commission will advance the next phase of adult-use retail licensing. This includes certifying Social Equity Applicants to ensure that those most affected by past cannabis enforcement have opportunities to participate in the regulated market.

The close of the adult-use retail license application period will mark a significant milestone, after which the Commission will review and verify applicant eligibility. Qualified applicants will then proceed to the random selection process, if necessary.

Hemp Program

The Commission will also build on its responsibilities related to the state's Hemp Program, now that the Commission has absorbed regulatory authority over hemp and hemp-derived products. With the hemp study required by the General Assembly's joint resolution (S0984A/H6270A) for the upcoming legislative session, the Commission will undergo an in-depth examination of hemp-derived THC-infused beverages. This study gives the Commission further opportunity to further integrate the Hemp Program within the broader regulatory framework of all products derived from the cannabis plant.

Findings from that study will be delivered to the General Assembly on or before March 1, 2026.

Continuing the Mission

Looking ahead, the Commission remains committed to diligent oversight of this emerging industry, with safety, transparency, and equity. As it has been since its inception, the agency is dedicated to strengthening its partnerships with state agencies and stakeholders, ensuring alignment and consideration across regulatory efforts. As we prepare for an exciting year ahead, the Commission is well positioned with expertise and confidence to adapt to the rapidly evolving cannabis and hemp sectors.