

Massachusetts Sends Cannabis Reform Bill to Governor

Massachusetts Cannabis Reform Bill Clearing Legislature Heads to Governor, Marking Major Overhaul of State Industry

Massachusetts lawmakers have given uncontested approval to sweeping cannabis legislation that will reshape the state's regulatory framework for both medical and adult-use markets, sending the measure to Gov. Maura Healey for final consideration.

The bill, titled **An Act Modernizing the Commonwealth's Cannabis Laws**, passed the House with a unanimous 155-0 vote on April 8 and cleared the Senate by voice vote on April 9. If signed by the governor, it will significantly restructure the state's 11-year-old medical cannabis program, 7-year-old recreational market, and regulatory approach to intoxicating hemp products.

Major Overhaul of Cannabis Control Commission Restructures Regulatory Authority and Strengthens Executive Oversight

At the center of the legislation is a sweeping reorganization of the state's Cannabis Control Commission (CCC), which would be reduced from five commissioners to three, all appointed by the governor.

Under the new structure, the CCC's executive director would report directly to the commission chair, with the bill also establishing clearer operational duties, reporting timelines, and accountability standards for the agency.

Lawmakers say the changes are intended to improve efficiency and restore confidence in a regulatory body that has faced ongoing scrutiny over governance and consistency.

The revised structure also includes appointment requirements: at least one commissioner must have a background in social justice, while the other two must bring expertise in public health, public safety, consumer commodity regulation, or cannabis production and distribution. No more than two commissioners may belong to the same political party, and the governor would gain authority to remove commissioners for cause, including inefficiency or neglect of duty.

Expanded Business Opportunities, Higher Purchase Limits, and Looser Restrictions Aim to Modernize Market Operations

The legislation introduces several business-friendly reforms designed to expand participation and streamline operations across the cannabis industry.

Among the most notable changes, the bill would increase license ownership limits to six per licensee across various categories, including retail, cultivation, and manufacturing. It would also remove the requirement that medical cannabis businesses operate under a vertically integrated model.

Consumer access would also expand, with the allowable purchase limit doubling to two ounces of flower. The CCC would be directed to adopt potency-based equivalency standards for non-flower products such as concentrates.

In addition, advertising restrictions would be loosened to allow dispensaries to promote discounts, sales, and loyalty programs within stores and through opt-in digital communications.

Lawmakers say these adjustments are designed to support small businesses, increase market stability, and reflect the maturation of the state's cannabis industry.

New Equity and Compliance Measures Target Market Fairness and Financial Accountability

The bill also seeks to strengthen equity participation while introducing stricter financial accountability rules for license holders.

A key provision raises the threshold for ownership classification from 10% to 20%, aiming to reduce loopholes that allowed hidden consolidation while preserving access for smaller investors and equity applicants.

To prevent financial disputes within the industry, the legislation would prohibit cannabis businesses from extending credit beyond 60 days. If payments are not made within that window, the CCC would publish a "delinquent business list," temporarily barring other licensees from conducting transactions with the unpaid operator until debts are resolved.

Supporters say the measure is intended to protect smaller operators from predatory practices and ensure fairer commercial standards across the sector.

State Mandates New Public Health Studies and Hemp Regulation Response Strategy

The CCC would also be required to conduct or coordinate multiple studies addressing public health and regulatory challenges tied to cannabis legalization.

These include research on youth consumption, impaired driving, hospitalizations, tax impacts on illicit market activity, product pricing and supply dynamics, workplace safety standards, and testing regulations.

Another key focus is the rapidly evolving hemp-derived cannabinoid market, with lawmakers directing regulators to respond to expected federal action targeting intoxicating hemp products that have proliferated in retail settings.

Officials say the studies are designed to provide a data-driven foundation for future regulatory adjustments as the market continues to evolve.

Cannabis Delivery Rules Expanded While Municipal Opt-Outs Remain Subject to Renewal Process

The legislation also updates cannabis delivery rules, allowing licensed delivery businesses to operate statewide unless municipalities opt out under specific conditions.

Local governments that prohibit cannabis establishments within their boundaries could request a waiver from the CCC to also prohibit deliveries, but such waivers would need to be renewed every two years.

Supporters say the provision balances local control with broader consumer access and reflects the growing importance of delivery services in the cannabis economy.

Lawmakers Describe Reform Bill as Structural “Modernization” of a Maturing Cannabis Market

State leaders behind the legislation described the measure as a comprehensive update designed to reflect the realities of a maturing industry.

Sen. Adam Gómez, D-Hampden, said the bill reflects “years of lived industry experience” and aims to improve oversight, economic stability, and public health reporting while expanding equitable participation.

Rep. Daniel M. Donahue, D-Worcester, said the reforms provide a more efficient regulatory framework that better supports licensed operators and ensures long-term industry success.

As the bill awaits Gov. Healey’s decision, supporters say it represents a pivotal shift toward a more streamlined, transparent, and economically sustainable cannabis system in Massachusetts.

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