

Rhode Island Legislators Revise Composition of Proposed Marijuana Study Commission

The Rhode Island House Committee on Judiciary has recommended passage of a revised bill recommending a study commission for marijuana legalization. The former bill was sent back to the Committee last week as the composition of the proposed commission was considered by some to be too “anti-marijuana.”

The revised bill, [H 5551 Substitute A4](#), would add 5 new members to the proposed Special Legislative Commission. Now comprising 22 members, the proposed Commission will be charged with studying the effects of legalizing recreational marijuana use on residents of Colorado and Washington, studying the fiscal impacts to those states, and studying the potential impact of legalizing recreational marijuana use in Rhode Island.

The 5 new members added to the Commission include the President of the Rhode Island Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the director of the local chapter of Direct Action for Rights and Equality (DARE), and the President of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO, or their designees. In addition there would be a local representative of Doctors for Cannabis Regulation (DFCR) and a criminal defense attorney.

The remaining 17 members remain the same as in the previous version of the bill. Of the 17 members, 3 will be appointed from each of the Senate and the House, one will be appointed from Smart Approaches to Marijuana or a similar organization, and one will be a member of an organization that is a proponent for the legalization of marijuana. Other members include the President of the Substance Use Mental Health Council of RI, the Executive Director of the Rhode Island Medical Society, the Director of the Department of Health, the President of the Rhode Island Police Chiefs' Association, and the Attorney General, or their designees. Finally, there will be 4 members representing the chambers of commerce, medical marijuana patients, educators, and mental health professionals.

The Commission will report its findings and results to the General Assembly by March 1, 2018.

Before becoming law, the Study Commission bill still must be approved by the full House of Representatives and the Senate, and signed by Governor Raimondo

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