Testimony on S.B. No. 16, An Act Concerning the Adult Use of Cannabis
Submitted to Connecticut General Assembly Joint Committee on Judiciary
Submitted by Shaleen Title, Commissioner, Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission
Monday, March 2, 2020 10:00am, Legislative Office Building Room 2C

Dear Co-Chair Winfield, Co-Chair Stafstrom, and Members of the Joint Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of S.B. No. 16 in my individual capacity as a commissioner for the Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission, the independent agency charged with regulating the adult-use and medical cannabis industries in our state. I serve as one of the agency’s five commissioners jointly appointed by the governor, treasurer, and attorney general. Together, we have broad experience in public health, public safety, and social justice, all of which are a strong focus in our legalization law, as they are in Senate Bill 16.

States that legalized cannabis prior to Massachusetts generously shared their experience with us, and similarly the main point I want to make is that we are glad to share with you the lessons we have learned and the data that we have collected. Massachusetts residents have now been able to grow cannabis at home and purchase regulated, tested, labeled cannabis without dangerous pesticides or additives for over two years. We are building the legal market in a steady, controlled, intentional way, and there are now more than 30 stores open and operating under strict health and safety focused regulations. And although I do not consider it my job to maximize tax revenue, the state is expected to collect at least $93 million in the current fiscal year.

Based on experience, the three suggestions I will leave you with are:

1. Ensure that municipal control is clearly outlined and fair, and that localities make equitable decisions to support small local businesses. In Massachusetts, it’s clear in hindsight that cities and towns needed more precise guidelines to ensure that they had the tools and resources to act equitably in support of the Commonwealth’s goals.

2. Grant preliminary licensing to businesses without requiring property. Securing property is one of the highest barriers to entry for cannabis businesses. We have seen many smaller businesses run out of capital while waiting for municipal approval or completing the state application process.

3. Place caps on the number of licenses that one person or entity may own or control. Enacting and enforcing this legal requirement has helped our state to avoid any one company dominating the market and to prevent predatory practices towards consumers or other businesses.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill. I am glad to discuss these or any other issues with you in more detail. You can reach me at shaleen.title@mass.gov.