**Attending and Testifying at a Legislative Public Hearing**

**Joint Committee on Cannabis Policy re:
 Hemp and Hemp Products in Massachusetts, H.4001 An Act Relative to Hemp and Hemp Products in the Commonwealth**

Members of the public get an opportunity to comment on bills at legislative committee public hearings. You can testify about why you support (or oppose) a bill and describe how a proposal for a new law could affect the lives of you, your community and Massachusetts residents. You have the power to share information and a personal perspective that can influence how a legislative committee deals with a bill. **Your story matters!**

**Background**

* Committees usually deal with a group of bills on the same general topic at one legislative hearing.
	+ On October 22, 2019 the [Joint Committee on](https://malegislature.gov/Committees/Detail/J50) Cannabis Policy will consider the [Hemp and Hemp Products Bill, H.4001](https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/H4001)  at the [Leicester Public Library, 1136 Main Street, Leicester, MA 01524](https://malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/3339), with only a few other hemp related bills.
* Anyone can testify at a hearing.
* Advocacy organizations describe the impact the bill would have on certain groups.
* Experts share data to strengthen the reasons for supporting or opposing the bill.
* Citizens share personal experiences and explain their positions on a bill. This type of testimony is essential – it demonstrates the depth of public support (or opposition), provides real-life context, and shows why the bill is important to individuals.

**What to Prepare and Expect**

* If you are attending the hearing you should arrive 20-30 minutes before the planned beginning of the hearing. Find the hearing room and sign-in on the sheet provided. For those submitting oral testimony, they will be called in the order they appear on the sign-up sheet. Someone will collect written testimony as well. You can bring a copy of it with you or submit it by email. You can also attend the hearing and show support just by your presence. There will be coalition volunteers outside hearing room to answer any questions and provide lapel buttons. The Hearing will be in the [**Leicester Public Library, 1135 Main Street, Leicester, MA 01524 on October 22, 2019 from 11:00am to 2:00pm**](https://malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/3339)**. Please arrive early to sign up.**
* **You don’t need to testify to help and show support.** By filling the hearing room with supporters, we can also demonstrate the overwhelming and broad support we have. **Help us fill the hearing room.**
* **Written Testimony**. Everyone can submit written testimony. This is a written letter or statement on why you think the committee should pass the **Hemp and Hemp Products in the Commonwealth bill**, and the other bills you support (see below). **If you are testifying orally you should bring a few copies of your testimony to give to the committee and others who may want it** (media, coalition partners etc.). If you are unable to attend or just planning on submitting written testimony you can give to the committee on the day of the hearing or email it ahead of the hearing to address below**. Written testimony can be written as a letter addressed to the Chairs and the “Members of the Committee. Make sure to prominently indicate the bill number, and whether your testimony is in support or opposition to the bill.**
	+ For Example: To Chairwoman Chang-Diaz, Chairman Rogers and members of the Joint Committee on Cannabis Policy.
	+ I am here today to testify in favor of the Hemp and Hemp Products in the Commonwealth bill, H.4001.
	+ Written testimony should be emailed to Sonia.Chang-Diaz@MaSenate.Gov and David.Rogers@mahouse.gov
	+ Include your name, address and your reason why you care about or support the Hemp and Hemp Products bill.
* Hearings do not last for a set amount of time: they can be brief or they can last for hours. You may wish to bring water in case the hearing runs long. The hearing is scheduled to run for three hours (11-2), but if there are still people testifying, it may run longer.
* Witnesses/experts may be invited to testify or organized in pre-set panels. The Committee will determine how they are calling those wishing to testify. Sometimes in order of sign up, sometimes alternating pro and con etc. Remember that there will be other bills heard at the hearing and we will need to wait for H.4001 to be called. It is customary for elected and other public officials to be invited to testify “out of turn” or whenever they show up.
* **When testifying orally**, thank the committee for the opportunity to testify, and provide your name and any relevant title or affiliation. Mention the bill number and whether you support or oppose the bill before setting out your reasons or providing your personal perspective. The urge the committee to pass the bill from their committee quickly. If you are a farmer and have left a crop in the field mid-harvest to attend the hearing, be sure to tactfully tell the committee this – it will give your testimony extra impact.
* Individual **testimony should last no more than 3 minutes, and ideally less. The time limit is usually enforced.** Introduce yourself to the committee and tell a brief personal story – and the reasons why you support the bill. Stories personalize the legislation to committee members and allow them to relate to how people are impacted by the problem or would be impacted by the bill. You want elected officials to understand why you are passionate about the issue and how it impacts their constituents. If you have more to say than can be conveyed in 3 minutes, it should be in your written testimony. It is best not to read your written testimony – just summarize it and speak about your personal story. If you are financially impacted by the bill, be prepared to tell the committee how – detailed financial numbers about how this legislation will affect your farm and your bottom line are the most important things you can tell them.
* NOSHA will be **organizing certain panels of experts** to make sure the key messages are hit. Even in the case of an expert panel, each must keep to 3 minutes or less, and we will work to make sure your primary messages are diverse. Please bring written testimony, on letterhead with your contact info, and any supporting documents to give to the committee.
* After you give your testimony, you may be asked follow-up questions by members of the committee. Don’t be afraid to say that you don’t have enough information for an answer. You can offer to try to get more information for the legislator and provide it later.

**DO**

* Do address the Chairs as Chairman/Chairwoman and the other members as ‘Representative’ or ‘Senator’ and check how to pronounce their names. (list of members below)
* Do refer to the bill title and bill number. The Hemp and Hemp Products Bill, H.4001 *An Act Relative to Hemp and Hemp Products in the Commonwealth*
* Do focus your testimony on the point/s that matter most to you. The coalition will make sure the key points are presented.
* Do be respectful and professional.

**DON’T**

* Don’t read from your written testimony. It’s better to talk with committee members and to look at them, not at your papers.
* Don’t try to answer a question when you don’t know the answer. You can offer to get more information for the legislator.
* Don’t argue with or criticize legislators who have different views.
* Don’t cheer or jeer anyone testifying.

State House Website: <https://malegislature.gov/>

Members of the Joint Committee on Cannabis Policy



Senator Chair, Sonia Chang-Diaz



House Chair, David Rogers

[**Full List of Committee Members here**](https://malegislature.gov/Committees/Detail/J50)

**Details of Joint Committee on** [**Cannabis**](https://malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/3339) **Policy Hearing on Agricultural and Miscellaneous Cannabis Issues**

**List of Bills for Hearing on Agricultural and Miscellaneous Cannabis Issues**

**H3519 *An Act Clarifying the Definition of Agricultura, by Representative Tricia Farley-Bouvier***

This bill will modify MGL 128 Section 1A (Farming and Agriculture Definitions) to include the ‘growing and cultivation of hemp and marihuana’. Farming cannabis will become a regular part of agricultural practice and protected under the Right to Farm. We support this bill.

**H.3532 *An Act Relative to Organic Farming Tools, by Representative Paul Mark***

This Bill will modify MGL 132B (Massachusetts Pesticide Control Act) Section 6 (Prohibited Activities) to have the Pesticide Control Board authorize the use of biological pesticides in hemp and marijuana if they are approved by the EPA for use on tobacco and food. We support this bill.

**H.3543 *An Act to Expand the Use of Organic Pest Control, by Representative Aaron Vega***

This bill will modify MGL 132B (Massachusetts Pesticide Control Act) Section 6 would allow biological agents to be applied to cannabis for mold, mildew and pest when consistent with federal labeling for flower plants and food products. We support this bill.

**H.4001 *An Act Relative to Hemp and Hemp Products in the Commonwealth.***

This bill will modify MGL 94G (Regulation of the Use and Distribution of Marijuana not Medically Prescribed) to exclude Cannabidiol (CBD) derived from hemp from the definition of ‘marijuana’. It will further modify this law – which defines hemp – to include all cannabinoids derived from hemp – and to define all parts of the hemp plant as an Agricultural Commodity (important to many rules, laws and codes in the Commonwealth).

This bill will also modify MGL 128 Sections 116-123 inclusive (The Massachusetts Hemp Program) to define hemp products (rather than leave the definition up to the Agricultural Commissioner as the law does now). The new definition of hemp products would allow hemp extract containing CBD to be added to food and to animal food, to not be considered an adulterant when added to food, and to consider flower a hemp product that can be sold by a licensed to hemp grower to a consumer. It sets the state THC limit to the federal THC limit, allows interstate commerce and specifies that THC from hemp is not a controlled substance (provided it adheres to federal guidelines.

We support this bill with one modification, that out of state hemp be held to the same testing standards as Massachusetts hemp (our standards are the highest in the nation and the same as those for medical marijuana), and with the specific addition of flower in the definition of ‘hemp products’. We urge that this bill be reported favorably out of committee as soon as possible to mitigate the legal chaos now embroiling the local hemp market (consumers are able to purchase product from other states/online that Massachusetts hemp farmers and manufacturers are forbidden to sell – putting law abiding farmers/producers at a an unfair disadvantage and consumers at risk from potentially untested product.

**S. 1127 *An Act Relative to Participation by Farmers and businesses of all sizes in the Regulated Marijuana Industry, by Senator Julian Cyr***

This bill will modify MGL 61A (Assessment and Taxation of Agricultural and Horticultural Land) to include ‘marijuana’ in the definition of agricultural crops.

We support this bill.

10.22.19