2019 Snapshot
Municipal Regulations of Medical Marijuana in RI
Paul Gonsalves, Principal Planner
Status of Marijuana Across the Nation

• At Fed level, Marijuana is Schedule 1 drug
• Medical Marijuana allowed in 33 states + D.C.
• Recreational Marijuana legalized in 11 states + D.C.
• Marijuana Possession* for Personal Use Decriminalized in 26 states + D.C.
33 Legal Medical Marijuana States & DC
11 Legal Recreational Marijuana States & DC

States with Legal Medical Marijuana
States with Legal Medical & Recreational Marijuana
National History of Medicinal Marijuana

• California was first in 1996
• Alaska, Oregon, & Washington state in 1998
• Maine was first New England State in 1999
• Between 2000-2009, eight states passed MM laws
• From 2010 to 2019, the remaining 20 states (+D.C.) passed MM laws
Rhode Island’s Medical Marijuana Act - Highlights

- The Edward O. Hawkins and Thomas C. Slater Medical Marijuana Act - passed in 2006
- Patients with qualifying ailments can grow up to 24 plants (12 mature) (caregivers are allowed as well). (Program through RI DOH)
- Plants must have “tags” from RI DBR ($25 each)
- In 2009, law was amended to allow dispensaries known as “Compassion Centers” (not-for-profit)
- “Cooperative & Licensed Cultivations” are allowed
Rhode Island’s Medical Marijuana Act - Highlights

• First Compassion Center location opened on 4/19/13 in Providence

• Currently, 3 Compassion Centers operate in Providence, Warwick and Portsmouth

• The law was amended in 2019 to allow for 6 additional compassion centers

• 2019 changes also includes ban on “Emporiums” and an increase in compassion centers license fees from $250,000 to $500,000.
What does this all mean for RI Municipalities?

- Information re: local regulation of medical marijuana regulations was obtained primarily through (1) municipal codes online, (2) municipal planners, (3) news articles from local media.
- As of July 2019, 28 out of 39 municipalities have addressed the issue in some fashion.
- 11 Municipalities: No regulations identified.
What does this all mean for RI Municipalities??

Breakdown of RI Cities & Towns' Medical Marijuana Regulations

- Allow for Emporiums: 2
- Allow for Compassion Centers: 15
- Allow for Cultivation: 18
How do RI Municipalities regulate MM?

- Zoning regulations for (1) Compassion Centers, (2) Cultivation Centers, and (3) Emporiums (now banned) vary from municipality to municipality.
- Several municipalities simply list the 3 uses in their Use Tables.
- Most municipalities who address MM only address it in the context of the above 3 uses, not personal cultivation.
- Several municipalities allow Compassion Centers only, by SUP in very few zones (Manufacturing/Industrial).
How do RI Municipalities regulate MM??

- Some municipalities ONLY offer Definitions of marijuana-related terms (placeholder for future regulations?)
- Regulating “Licensed Cultivators” is tricky, as operators like to have their locations remain anonymous. (Can ONLY sell directly to Compassion Centers)
- According to DBR, 79 approved applications- 11 cultivators were given licenses in 2018, and 37 in 2019 (48 Total in RI)
- A few regulations mention marijuana “extracts”, which is causing some growing concern
What’s next in MM Regulation in RI??

- Home delivery for MM card holders?
- Enhanced state requirements for quality testing?
- Legalizing Recreational use?

- Stay tuned... Statewide Planning’s Legislative reports begin again in roughly 13 weeks!

PAUL.GONSALVES@DOA.RI.GOV