



Task Force to Analyze Industrial Hemp Extracts
Department of Agriculture and Forestry
Commonwealth of Virginia

August 11, 2022

Task Force Members:

I am writing as a representative of the nation's longest-standing hemp nonprofit, the Hemp Industries Association, with hundreds farming and business members in Virginia and nationwide. The HIA has been leading efforts to dispel myths about hemp for almost thirty years by educating consumers and lawmakers alike on the remarkable properties and extraordinary potential of the hemp plant, advocating for scientific research, and advancing standards and practices in the hemp industry that put consumer health first. We are grateful for the opportunity to provide an additional comment in response to the August 9th meeting of the Task Force.

The meeting reflected many valuable perspectives, but also included some misconceptions stated as fact —along with a couple of crucial points that were not able to be raised in the limited time available. Our comments are going to be limited as well, but hope that the illustration of how readily the subject of hemp-derived cannabinoids can be misconstrued will be helpful in focusing the Task Force on its important work in the future.

Multiple speakers cited warnings about the warning of potential health risks related to Delta 8 THC that was issued by the FDA, noting that the national poison control centers had received more than 2300 reports of potential exposures to Delta 8 THC products over a 13-month period. For context, these are some substances reported more than 2,300 times to the poison control centers over the most recent 12-month period with available data: artist paints (non-water color) - 3,123 exposures; fluoride toothpaste - 12,935 exposures; hand soap - 13,190 exposures; antacids - 9,151; multi-vitamin tablets - 11,592 exposures. The NIH's 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health provides further valuable context by reporting that approximately 95,000 people die each year from alcohol-related deaths (including more than 4,000 overdoses alone). In that context, the approximately 2,300 Delta 8 exposures over a thirteen-month period cannot credibly be characterized as alarming.



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What is alarming in those reports is the evidence that these products have been too readily falling into the hands of minors. The Commonwealth can address these concerns by utilizing common-sense solutions like age restrictions, marketing guidelines, and child-resistant packaging.

One of the most pervasive misconceptions about hemp-derived cannabinoids like Delta 8 THC is that you can safeguard consumers by banning them. However, it takes a high degree of manufacturing expertise, scientific rigor, and costly technology to produce safe Delta 8—but it can be made much more cheaply and easily if you aren't concerned about producing a safe and clean product. Given the burgeoning demand for these products from consumers in the state, prohibiting Delta 8 will inevitably lead to black markets filled with untested products created using substandard—and therefore unsafe—tools and methods. The reality is that keeping these products safe means keeping them legal.

The leading manufacturers of these products are investing millions in their enterprises and acting responsibly to promulgate standards and educate the market, and have been actively engaging with legislators and regulators to establish guidelines for their products. And farmers who, from 2019 thru 2021, were suffering from an oversupply of unsold CBD hemp finally saw some relief as the demand for hemp-derived cannabinoid products finally cleared out most of those inventories. Virginia's consumers, entrepreneurs, and farmers deserve the opportunity to make the most of hemp's potential—and the security of safe, regulated markets for all hemp products.

Thank you for your diligent attention to these important matters and your dedicated service on behalf of the citizens of the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jody McGinness".

Jody McGinness
Executive Director
The Hemp Industries Association



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