

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA



THE CANNABIS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

NO. OF 2026

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA
THE CANNABIS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026
ARRANGEMENT OF CLAUSES

1. Short Title	4
2. Interpretation.....	4
3. Amendment of section 2 – Interpretation	4
4. Amendment of section 57 – Types of licences	5
5. Insertion of new sections 57A – 57D.....	6
6. Insertion of new section 58A – Institutional Caregiver Licence.....	10
7. Insertion of new sections 59A – 59B.....	11
8. Amendment of section 60 – Prohibitions.....	13
9. Amendment of section 64 – Regulations	14
10. Consequential amendment.....	15

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA
THE CANNABIS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026
NO. OF 2026

AN ACT to amend the Cannabis Act, 2018 to provide for new licensing categories, the registration and protection of cannabis strains and for related matters.

ENACTED by the Parliament of Antigua and Barbuda as follows—

1. Short Title

This Act may be cited as the Cannabis (Amendment) Act, 2026.

2. Interpretation

In this Act—

“principal Act” means the Cannabis Act, 2018 (No. 28 of 2018).

3. Amendment of section 2 – Interpretation

Section 2 of the principal Act is amended—

- (a) by deleting the definition of “Medical Professional” and substituting the following—

“Medical professional” means a person duly licensed under the Medical Practitioners Act, 2009, the Medical Act, Cap. 269, or the Pharmacy Act, 1995;

- (b) by inserting, in the appropriate alphabetical position, the following definitions—

“domestic supply” means the distribution, sale or other supply of cannabis or a cannabis product within Antigua and Barbuda, and does not include export;

“Institutional Caregiver Licence” means a licence granted under section 58A;

“Micro-Manufacturer's Licence” means a licence granted under section 57A;

“non-combustible cannabis product” means a tincture, tea, oil, topical preparation, capsule or other preparation approved by the Authority, but does not include a cannabis product intended for smoking;

"registered nurse" means a person registered as a nurse, and includes a person registered as a midwife, under the applicable law;

"registered strain" means a cannabis strain entered in the Cannabis Strain Registry established under section 59A;

"small-scale production" means the production, in any period of twelve months, of non-combustible cannabis products from a quantity of cannabis not exceeding twenty-five kilogrammes of dried cannabis or 5 kilogrammes of oil extract, and the Minister may by Order vary the quantity specified in this definition;

"Temporary Lounge Licence" means a licence granted under section 57C; and

"Wellness Experience Licence" means a licence granted under section 57D.

4. Amendment of section 57 – Types of licences

Section 57(1) of the principal Act is amended—

(a) by deleting all paragraphs after paragraph (j);

(b) by inserting after paragraph (j) the following new paragraphs:

“(k) Medicinal Cannabis Therapeutic Centre Licence which shall permit the use of medicinal cannabis products for the purpose of massage therapy and other external treatments to patients by persons who possess a qualification approved by the Authority

(l) Medicinal Cannabis Cooperative Licence;

(m) Cannabis Education Provider Licence, which authorises the holder to provide education, training, certification and continuing professional education relating to medicinal cannabis in accordance with this Act and the regulations;

(n) Micro-Manufacturer's Licence, which authorises the holder to manufacture non-combustible cannabis products on a small-scale basis for domestic supply in accordance with this Act and the regulations;

(o) Temporary Lounge Licence, which authorises the holder to establish and operate a temporary medicinal cannabis consumption lounge at an approved event in accordance with this Act and the regulations;

(p) Wellness Experience Licence, which authorises the holder to provide approved educational, cultural and wellness experiences incorporating the supervised use of medicinal cannabis in accordance with this Act and the regulations; and

- (q) an Institutional Caregiver Licence, which authorises an approved hospital, hospice, assisted living facility, licensed group home, therapeutic centre or other institution approved by the Authority to possess, administer and manage medicinal cannabis for authorised patients in accordance with this Act and the regulations."

5. Insertion of new sections 57A – 57D

The principal Act is amended by inserting after section 57 the following sections—

57A. Micro-Manufacturer's Licence

- (1) The holder of a Micro-Manufacturer's Licence shall carry on manufacturing on a small-scale basis and shall not exceed the quantity specified in the definition of “small-scale production” in section 2 unless—
 - (a) the Authority has approved the excess; or
 - (b) the holder has obtained a Manufacturer's Licence under this Act.
- (2) A Micro-Manufacturer shall—
 - (a) obtain cannabis for processing from a licensed cultivator, licensed processor or such other licensee as may be prescribed; and
 - (b) supply a non-combustible cannabis product to a licensed dispensary, registered pharmacy or to an entity approved by the Authority.
- (3) A Micro-Manufacturer shall not supply a non-combustible cannabis product unless it has been tested and certified by a licensed Medicinal Cannabis Testing Facility in accordance with the prescribed standards.
- (4) A Micro-Manufacturer's Licence authorises the holder to manufacture non-combustible cannabis products for domestic supply.
- (5) The holder of a Micro-Manufacturer's Licence shall not—
 - (a) export cannabis or cannabis products;
 - (b) manufacture a cannabis product intended for smoking; or
 - (c) sell cannabis or a cannabis product directly to a consumer.
- (6) A Micro-Manufacturer shall be registered in the Antigua and Barbuda Cannabis Tracking System maintained by the Authority and shall record in that system every receipt, transfer and disposal of cannabis and cannabis products.

57B. Temporary Lounge Licence

- (1) A Temporary Lounge Licence authorises the holder to establish and operate a temporary medicinal cannabis consumption lounge at an approved event for the approved duration.
- (2) A temporary lounge operated under a Temporary Lounge Licence—
 - (a) shall be established within an access-controlled area, on premises approved by the Authority;
 - (b) shall not be open to, or accessible by, the general public;
 - (c) shall admit only an authorized patient whose status has been verified in accordance with subsection (10); and
 - (d) shall not be established, operated or held out in a manner that permits or promotes the recreational use of cannabis.
- (3) A person shall not be admitted to premises operating under a Temporary Lounge Licence unless the person is an authorized patient.
- (4) The holder of a Temporary Lounge Licence shall partner with a licensed dispensary for the supply of medicinal cannabis at the temporary lounge.
- (5) Medicinal cannabis dispensed at a temporary lounge—
 - (a) shall be supplied by the licensed dispensary with which the holder has partnered;
 - (b) shall be dispensed through the patient portal;
 - (c) shall be recorded in the Antigua and Barbuda Cannabis Tracking System maintained by the Authority; and
 - (d) shall not exceed the quantity that a patient is authorised to obtain under this Act.
- (6) The holder of a Temporary Lounge Licence shall ensure that—
 - (a) at least one medical professional or registered nurse is present at all times;
 - (b) alcohol is not consumed in the lounge;
 - (c) no person removes from the lounge a cannabis product that has been ignited;
 - (d) the prescribed maximum occupancy, fire, ventilation and sanitation standards are complied with; and
 - (e) all cannabis is delivered to the venue by a licensed transporter.
- (7) A temporary lounge shall not open or operate unless at least one authorised officer or other representative of the Authority is present at the venue from the commencement of the

event until its conclusion to oversee and monitor compliance with this Act, the regulations and the conditions of the Temporary Lounge Licence, and the holder of the Temporary Lounge Licence shall not permit the temporary lounge to open or operate in the absence of such an authorised officer or representative.

- (8) The holder of a Temporary Lounge Licence shall refuse to permit the consumption of medicinal cannabis where the holder reasonably believes that a person—
- (a) is intoxicated;
 - (b) is likely to endanger his or her own safety or the safety of another person;
 - (c) is engaging, or is likely to engage, in disorderly or unlawful conduct; or
 - (d) would otherwise contravene this Act or the regulations.
- (9) A Temporary Lounge Licence shall be valid only for the approved event and the approved duration, which shall not exceed the duration of the approved event and, in any event, seventy-two hours.
- (10) The holder of a Temporary Lounge Licence shall not sell cannabis outside the lounge.
- (11) The holder of a Temporary Lounge Licence shall, before admitting a person to the temporary lounge, verify through the patient portal that the person is an authorized patient, and a person shall not be registered as a patient at the venue or during the event.
- (12) Nothing in this section authorises the recreational use of cannabis, and the quantity of medicinal cannabis dispensed to and consumed by an authorized patient in a temporary lounge shall not exceed the quantity that the patient is authorised to obtain under this Act.

57C. Wellness Experience Licence

- (1) A Wellness Experience Licence authorises the holder to provide guided educational, cultural and wellness activities incorporating the supervised medicinal use of cannabis by an authorized patient.
- (2) A person is not eligible to be granted, or to hold, a Wellness Experience Licence unless—
- (a) where the person is an individual, the person has successfully completed the training and certification approved or provided by the Authority for holders of a Wellness Experience Licence; or
 - (b) where the person is a body corporate, each director and every person responsible for the management or control of the licensed activity has successfully completed the training and certification approved or provided by the Authority.

- (3) The holder of a Wellness Experience Licence shall ensure that every wellness experience is conducted under the supervision of a wellness supervisor who has successfully completed the training and certification approved or provided by the Authority.
- (4) Medicinal cannabis used in a wellness experience—
 - (a) shall be obtained from a licensed dispensary;
 - (b) shall be consumed during the approved wellness experience under the supervision of a wellness supervisor approved by the Authority; and
 - (c) shall not be sold, gifted, removed or otherwise transferred by the participant.
- (5) A wellness experience shall incorporate genuine educational, cultural or therapeutic content relating to the medicinal use of cannabis.
- (6) The holder of a Wellness Experience Licence shall reasonably ensure that medicinal cannabis is consumed in a safe and responsible manner.
- (7) The holder of a Wellness Experience Licence shall refuse to permit the consumption of medicinal cannabis where the holder reasonably believes that a person—
 - (a) is intoxicated;
 - (b) is likely to endanger his or her own safety or the safety of another person;
 - (c) is engaging, or is likely to engage, in disorderly or unlawful conduct; or
 - (d) would otherwise contravene this Act or the regulations.
- (8) The holder of a Wellness Experience Licence shall not—
 - (a) subject to subsection (7), cultivate or manufacture cannabis, unless approved by the Authority;
 - (b) permit the use of cannabis obtained from a source other than a licensed dispensary; or
 - (c) permit the consumption of alcohol by a participant consuming medicinal cannabis.
- (9) Nothing in this section prevents the holder of a Wellness Experience Licence from applying for or holding a Medicinal Cannabis Cultivation Licence under this Act, subject to satisfying the requirements applicable to that licence.

(1) The Authority may, upon application made in the prescribed form and payment of the prescribed fee, issue a Medicinal Cannabis Education Provider Licence to a person who satisfies the requirements of this Act and the regulations.

(2) A Medicinal Cannabis Education Provider Licence shall authorise the holder to provide education, training, certification and continuing professional education relating to medicinal cannabis in accordance with this Act.

(3) A licensee shall comply with any standards, curriculum requirements, codes of practice or other requirements approved or issued by the Authority.

(4) A licensee shall not represent that any course, programme or certification is approved by the Authority unless that approval has been granted in writing.

(5) The Authority may approve, suspend or withdraw approval of any curriculum, programme or course delivered under a Medicinal Cannabis Education Provider Licence.

(6) The Authority may impose such conditions on a licence as it considers necessary for the proper regulation of medicinal cannabis education.

(7) The Authority may suspend or revoke a licence where the holder fails to comply with this Act, the regulations or any condition of the licence.

6. Insertion of new section 58A – Institutional Caregiver Licence

The principal Act is amended by inserting after section 58 the following section—

“58A. Institutional Caregiver Licence

(1) An Institutional Caregiver Licence authorises the institution to which it is granted to possess, store and administer medicinal cannabis to its residents or patients through members of its staff

approved under subsection (2), notwithstanding any prescribed limit on the number of patients for whom a caregiver may act.

(2) The holder of an Institutional Caregiver Licence shall ensure that medicinal cannabis is administered only by a member of the institution's staff who—

- (a) is a medical professional or a registered nurse;
- (b) has successfully completed such training as may be approved by the Authority; and
- (c) has been approved by the Authority for that purpose.

(3) The holder of an Institutional Caregiver Licence shall designate a responsible officer who—

- (a) is a medical professional or a registered nurse;
- (b) has been approved by the Authority; and
- (c) is responsible for ensuring the secure storage, administration, record-keeping and accountability for all medicinal cannabis kept or administered by the institution.

(4) The responsible officer shall maintain such records relating to the receipt, storage, administration and disposal of medicinal cannabis as may be prescribed and shall produce those records to the Authority upon request.

(5) Nothing in this section shall be construed as affecting any requirement imposed by the Pharmacy Act, 1995, the Medical Act, the Nurses Registration Act, Cap. 296, or any other enactment relating to the administration of medicinal products.

(6) The holder of an Institutional Caregiver Licence shall take all reasonable measures to prevent the loss, theft, diversion or unauthorised access to medicinal cannabis kept by the institution.”

7. Insertion of new sections 59A – 59B

The principal Act is amended by inserting after section 59 the following sections—

“59A. Cannabis Strain Registry

- (1) The Authority shall establish and maintain a Cannabis Strain Registry for the registration of cannabis strains bred or developed in Antigua and Barbuda.
- (2) A licensed cultivator who has bred or developed a distinct cannabis strain may apply to the Authority, in the prescribed form, for registration of the strain in the Cannabis Strain Registry.
- (3) The Authority shall, in maintaining the Cannabis Strain Registry, cooperate with the Antigua and Barbuda Intellectual Property and Commerce Office to facilitate the protection of—
 - (a) a registered cannabis strain;
 - (b) any intellectual property associated with a registered cannabis strain; and
 - (c) any name, mark, branding or other distinguishing feature associated with a registered cannabis strain, under any applicable law, including—
 - (i) the Copyright Act, 2003;
 - (ii) the Trade Marks Act, 2003;
 - (iii) the Geographical Indications Act, 2003;
 - (iv) any enactment providing for the protection of new plant varieties; and
 - (v) any enactment or international instrument relating to access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilization.
- (4) The registration of a cannabis strain under this Act does not confer ownership, intellectual property rights or exclusive commercial rights in that strain and does not affect the operation of any law relating to patents, copyright, trademarks, plant breeders' rights, confidential information or any other intellectual property right.
- (5) A person shall not export the genetic material of a registered cannabis strain unless—
 - (a) the Authority has granted its prior written approval; and
 - (b) the prescribed conditions, including any requirement relating to the fair and equitable sharing of benefits, have been satisfied.
- (6) The Authority may establish or approve arrangements for the preservation of the genetic material of a registered cannabis strain, including storage at a tissue culture facility or such other facility as the Authority considers appropriate.

59B. Medicinal Cannabis Cooperative Licence: Single Membership

- (1) A person shall not, at any one time—

- (a) be the beneficial owner of more than one holder of a Medicinal Cannabis Cooperative Licence; or
 - (b) hold a controlling interest in more than one holder of a Medicinal Cannabis Cooperative Licence.
- (2) An applicant for, and the holder of, a Medicinal Cannabis Cooperative Licence shall—
- (a) submit to the Authority a declaration of beneficial ownership in the prescribed form; and
 - (b) notify the Authority, in the prescribed manner and within the prescribed period, of any change in beneficial ownership or control.

8. Amendment of section 60 – Prohibitions

Section 60 of the principal Act is amended by inserting after subsection (1) the following subsection—

“(1A) Subsection (1)(c)(v) shall not apply to the use of medicinal cannabis by an authorized patient—

- (a) in a temporary lounge operated under a Temporary Lounge Licence; or
- (b) in the course of an approved wellness experience operated under a Wellness Experience Licence,

where the use is in accordance with this Act, the regulations and any condition imposed by the Authority, and, in the case of a temporary lounge, only within the access-controlled area of that lounge and not in any other public place.

(1B) Subject to subsection (1C), a person under the age of twenty-one years shall not—

- (a) purchase, acquire, possess, use or be supplied with medicinal cannabis;
- (b) be registered as a patient under section 48; or
- (c) be admitted to, or consume medicinal cannabis at—
 - (i) a temporary lounge operated under a Temporary Lounge Licence; or
 - (ii) a wellness experience operated under a Wellness Experience Licence.

(1C) Subsection (1B)(a) and (b) does not apply—

- (a) to a person who has attained the age of eighteen years but is under the age of twenty-one years, where a medical practitioner registered under the Medical Practitioners Act, 2009 or the Medical Act, Cap. 269 has, in writing, recommended or authorised the person's registration as a patient and use of medicinal cannabis; or

(b) to a person under the age of eighteen years, where—

- (i) a medical practitioner registered under the Medical Practitioners Act, 2009 or the Medical Act, Cap. 269 has, in writing, recommended or authorised the person's registration as a patient and use of medicinal cannabis;
- (ii) a parent or guardian has given written consent to the registration and use; and
- (iii) the medicinal cannabis is used under the supervision of the parent, guardian or an approved caregiver in accordance with this Act.

(1D) A person under the age of twenty-one years shall not be admitted to a temporary lounge operated under a Temporary Lounge Licence or to a wellness experience operated under a Wellness Experience Licence, notwithstanding that the person is registered as a patient under section 48.

(1E) Nothing in this section shall be construed as limiting the lawful access of an authorized patient who is under twenty-one years of age where access is otherwise permitted under this Act through a parent, legal guardian or authorised caregiver.”

9. Amendment of section 64 – Regulations

Section 64(2) of the principal Act is amended by inserting after paragraph (p) the following paragraphs—

- “(q) the grant, renewal, suspension and revocation of a Micro-Manufacturer’s Licence, a Temporary Lounge Licence, a Wellness Experience Licence and an Institutional Caregiver Licence;
- (r) the establishment, operation and maintenance of the Cannabis Strain Registry, including the registration, preservation, protection and benefit-sharing arrangements applicable to registered cannabis strains;
- (s) a voluntary certification scheme for carbon-neutral and carbon-negative cannabis cultivation, manufacture and processing, including the criteria for certification and any incentives applicable to a certified operation;
- (t) prescribing offences for the contravention of regulations made under this Act and prescribing penalties for those offences not exceeding the maximum penalty specified in this Act;
- (u) the training, examination, certification and approval of holders of Wellness Experience Licences, Temporary Lounge Licences and Cannabis Education Provider Licences, and of persons who conduct or supervise activities authorised under those licences, including the standards, content and duration of the required training and certification;

(w) the minimum age for access to, and use of, medicinal cannabis, including the consents, authorisations, supervision and other safeguards applicable to persons who have not attained that age.

A reference in the principal Act or in any regulations made under the principal Act to the "Medicinal Collaborative Grow Licence" or the "Collaborative Grow Licence" shall be read as a reference to the "Medicinal Cannabis Cooperative Licence".

Passed the Senate on the _____ day of _____, 2026.

.....

President.

.....

Clerk to the Senate.

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

This Bill amends the Cannabis Act, 2018 to strengthen the regulatory framework governing medicinal cannabis in Antigua and Barbuda by introducing new licensing categories, providing for the registration and protection of locally developed cannabis strains, and making consequential and related amendments. The Bill establishes a Micro-Manufacturer's Licence, a Temporary Lounge Licence, a Wellness Experience Licence, a Cannabis Education Provider Licence and an Institutional Caregiver Licence to support the safe cultivation, manufacture, processing, distribution, administration, education and professional training, and supervised medicinal use of cannabis. It also establishes a Cannabis Strain Registry to facilitate the registration, preservation and protection of cannabis strains bred or developed in Antigua and Barbuda and to support the protection of associated intellectual property and benefit-sharing arrangements.

The Bill further provides for the licensing and regulation of persons offering education, instruction and training relating to medicinal cannabis, including the approval of courses and instructors by the Authority, in order to promote professional standards, public confidence and workforce development within the medicinal cannabis industry. The Bill further strengthens the regulatory framework by providing for enhanced oversight, expanding the regulation-making powers of the Minister, renaming the Medicinal Collaborative Grow Licence as the Medicinal Cannabis Cooperative Licence, and making consequential amendments necessary for the effective administration of the Act. The Bill also clarifies the scope of the definition of "Medical Professional" by providing that a dentist may practise only in relation to the diagnosis and treatment of conditions affecting the oral cavity, teeth, gums, jaw and associated oral structures. The Bill further requires the presence of an authorised officer or other representative of the Authority throughout the operation of a temporary lounge conducted under a Temporary Lounge Licence. It also requires the holder of a Wellness Experience Licence, and every person who conducts or supervises a wellness experience, to complete the training and certification approved or provided by the Authority. In addition, the Bill establishes a minimum age of twenty-one years for access to, and the use of, medicinal cannabis, while preserving limited exceptions that permit a person under that age to be registered as a patient and to use medicinal cannabis where authorised in writing by a medical practitioner and, in the case of a person under eighteen years of age, with the written consent of a parent or guardian and under appropriate supervision. The Bill reinforces the medicinal character of the Temporary Lounge Licence and the Wellness Experience Licence where a temporary lounge must be an enclosed, access-controlled area that is not a public place and is not open to the general public and only an authorized patient whose status has been verified may be admitted, and neither

licence authorises the recreational use of cannabis. The maximum duration of a temporary lounge and the small-scale production limit are stated in the Act rather than left to regulations.

CLAUSE-BY-CLAUSE ANALYSIS

Clause 1 – Short title

Provides for the short title of the Act.

Clause 2 – Interpretation

Defines the expression "principal Act" as the Cannabis Act, 2018.

Clause 3 – Amendment of section 2 (Interpretation)

Amends the interpretation section by revising existing definitions and inserting new definitions required to support the new licensing framework and related amendments. In particular, the amended definition of “Medical Professional” limits a dentist to matters concerning the oral cavity.

Clause 4 – Amendment of section 57 (Types of licences)

Renames the Medicinal Collaborative Grow Licence as the Medicinal Cannabis Cooperative Licence and introduces additional licence categories under the Act.

Clause 5 – Insertion of new sections 57A to 57D

Inserts provisions establishing the Micro-Manufacturer's Licence, Temporary Lounge Licence, Wellness Experience Licence and Cannabis Education Provider Licence, including their respective powers, duties, restrictions and operational requirements. The Temporary Lounge Licence and the Wellness Experience Licence are confined to demonstrably medicinal use: admission is limited to verified authorized patients, the lounge must be an access-controlled space, supervision is provided by a wellness supervisor approved by the Authority, and recreational use is expressly excluded. It further requires the presence of an authorised officer of the Authority throughout an event operated under a Temporary Lounge Licence, and requires the holder of a Wellness Experience Licence, and every certified tour conductor supervising a wellness experience, to complete the training and certification approved by the Authority.

Clause 6 – Insertion of new section 58A -Institutional Caregiver Licence

Provides for the grant and regulation of Institutional Caregiver Licences, including requirements relating to the administration, storage, security and accountability for medicinal cannabis within approved institutions.

Clause 7 – Insertion of new sections 59A and 59B

Establishes a Cannabis Strain Registry for the registration and protection of locally developed cannabis strains and introduces beneficial ownership requirements applicable to holders of

Cooperative Licences. The provision protecting the names, marks and features associated with a registered strain has been re-lettered for clarity, and the expression "beneficial owner" is tied to a specified enactment.

Clause 8 – Amendment of section 60 (Prohibitions)

Creates a limited exception to the prohibition on the use of medicinal cannabis in a public place to permit its lawful use in a Temporary Lounge Licence or Wellness Experience Licence in accordance with the Act. It also establishes a minimum age of twenty-one years for access to and the use of medicinal cannabis, while permitting supervised medicinal use by a person under that age where a medical practitioner has so authorised and, in the case of a person under eighteen years, where a parent or guardian has given written consent; a person under the age of twenty-one years may not, however, be admitted to a temporary lounge or a wellness experience.

Clause 9 – Amendment of section 64-Regulations

Expands the regulation-making powers to support the administration and implementation of the new licensing categories, the Cannabis Strain Registry and related matters. It also enables the making of regulations governing the training and certification of licensees, the attendance and functions of authorised officers of the Authority at temporary lounge events, and the safeguards applicable to access to medicinal cannabis by persons under the minimum age.

Clause 10 – Consequential amendment

Updates references in the principal Act and any regulations made under it to reflect the renaming of the Medicinal Collaborative Grow Licence as the Medicinal Cannabis Cooperative Licence.

Hon. Sir Steadroy C. O. Benjamin
Attorney General; and
Minister responsible for Legal Affairs