

## State Cannabis Legislation and Medical Marijuana Dispensaries

April 12, 2019

Seven states have authorized retail sales of cannabis to the general public: California, Massachusetts, Oregon, Colorado, Washington, Nevada, and Alaska.

This table below describes whether these states have authorized a head start for medical marijuana dispensaries (allowing them to sell to the general public before other retail licenses are issued) or created automatic retail licenses for dispensaries.

	California <sup>1</sup>	Massachusetts <sup>2</sup>	Oregon <sup>3</sup>	Colorado <sup>4</sup>	Washington <sup>5</sup>	Nevada <sup>6</sup>	Alaska <sup>7</sup>
Head-start or Automatic Licensure	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A

<sup>1</sup> California dispensaries are entitled to add an adult-use designation to their existing license by notifying the California Bureau of Cannabis Control. See section [5023\(f\)](#) of the Bureau regulations.

<sup>2</sup> The Massachusetts [referendum](#) adopting legalization provided that until January 1, 2018, the Cannabis Control Commission “shall issue licenses first to applicants with the most experience operating medical marijuana treatment centers.” The Massachusetts legislature subsequently created a priority for applications by medical marijuana dispensaries. See Chapter 55 of the Acts of 2017, [Section 56\(a\)](#).

<sup>3</sup> Oregon gave existing dispensaries a 12-month head start, allowing them to begin sales on October 1, 2015 while new recreational retailers were not issued licenses until October 1, 2016. See [SB.460](#).

<sup>4</sup> Colorado gave existing dispensaries a 9-month head start. See section 12-43.4-104 of [House Bill 13-1317](#).

<sup>5</sup> Washington gave existing dispensaries first priority in retail licensing. See Section 6 in [Senate Bill 5052](#).

<sup>6</sup> Nevada provided dispensaries an 18-month head start. See section NRS 453D.210 of [Nevada Administrative Statute 453D](#).

<sup>7</sup> Alaska has never issued licenses to medical marijuana dispensaries, so it was not possible to give a head start or automatic licensure to such entities.