

LABOR RELATIONS INTERNAL INVESTIGATION SUMMARY

I. INVESTIGATION REPORT PREPARED BY:

Kristina Plyler, Agency Labor Relations Manager

Kristina Plyler 5/30/25

II. SUBJECT OF INVESTIGATION:

Rodrick Marriott, Consumer Protection Drug Control Division Director, Department of Consumer Protection

III. MATTER UNDER INVESTIGATION:

This is a labor relations internal investigation pertaining to a referral made by the Department of Consumer Protection (DCP) of alleged employee misconduct by Rodrick Marriott.

IV. ISSUE(S):

This matter was referred by Theresa Judge, HR Business Partner 3, on Monday March 24, 2025, via email, which requested a formal investigation into allegations of possible misconduct against Rodrick Marriott. Specifically, on March 20, 2025, Rodrick Marriott directed his drug control agents to perform a surprise inspection on Affinity Grow, a cannabis business, which directly followed the General Law Committee Public Hearing held the prior day, during which the business owner, Rino Ferrarese, testified in opposition to DCP's position on a cannabis bill. An investigation was initiated on March 27, 2025.

V. EMPLOYMENT HISTORY/BACKGROUND

Rodrick Marriott was hired by DCP on June 20, 2008, as a CP Drug Control Agent. He was promoted to CP Drug Control Division Director on April 29, 2016. He successfully completed his promotional working test period on October 28, 2016. A review of Mr. Marriott's official personnel file found no record of discipline.

VI. STANDARD OF REVIEW - LAWS/REGULATIONS/POLICIES

Connecticut General Statute Sec. 21a-11. (Formerly Sec. 19-171). Powers and duties of commissioner. (a)(1) The Commissioner of Consumer Protection may, subject to the provisions of chapter 67, employ such agents and assistants as are necessary to enforce the provisions of the general statutes wherein the commissioner is empowered to carry out the duties and responsibilities assigned to the commissioner or the Department of Consumer Protection. **For the purpose of inquiring into any suspected violation of such provisions, the commissioner and the commissioner's deputy and assistants shall have free access, at all reasonable hours, to all places and premises, homes and apartments of private families keeping no boarders excepted.** The commissioner and the commissioner's deputy or assistants shall have the authority to issue citations pursuant to section 51-164n for violations for the purpose of enforcing such provisions. The commissioner may delegate the commissioner's authority to render a final decision in a contested case to a hearing officer employed by, or contracted with, the department. (emphasis added)

Connecticut General Statute Sec. 21a-421o. Record retention requirements for cannabis establishments. Audits and inspections. Confidentiality of information. (a) Each cannabis establishment shall maintain all records necessary to fully demonstrate business transactions related to cannabis for a period covering the current taxable year and the three immediately preceding taxable years, all of which shall be made available to the department pursuant to subsection (c) of this section.

(b) The commissioner may require any licensee to furnish such information as the commissioner considers necessary for the proper administration of RERACA [Responsible and Equitable Regulation of Adult-Use Cannabis Act], and may require an audit of any cannabis establishment, the expense thereof to be paid by such cannabis establishment.

(c) Each cannabis establishment, and each person in charge, or having custody, of such documents, shall maintain such documents in an auditable format for the current taxable year and the three preceding taxable years. Upon request, such person shall make such documents immediately available for inspection and copying by the commissioner or any other enforcement agency or others authorized by RERACA, and shall produce copies of such documents to the commissioner or commissioner's authorized representative within two business days. Such documents shall be provided to the commissioner in electronic format, unless not commercially practical. In complying with the provisions of this subsection, no person shall use a foreign language, codes or symbols to designate cannabis or cannabis product types or persons in the keeping of any required document.

(d) For purposes of the supervision and enforcement of the provisions of RERACA, the commissioner may:

(1) Enter any place, including a vehicle, in which cannabis is held, sold, produced, delivered, transported, manufactured or otherwise disposed of;

(2) Inspect a cannabis establishment and all pertinent equipment, finished and unfinished material, containers and labeling, and all things in such place, including records, files, financial data, sales data, shipping data, pricing data, employee data, research, papers, processes, controls and facilities; and

(3) Inventory any stock of cannabis and obtain samples of any cannabis, any labels or containers, paraphernalia and of any finished or unfinished material. (emphasis added)

Regulations of CT State Agencies Section 21a-421j-6. Licensee Records; Furnishing Information; Audits

(d) The commissioner may: (1) Enter, at reasonable times, any place, including a vehicle, in which cannabis is held, dispensed, sold, produced, manufactured, delivered, transported, or otherwise disposed of, the licensee and the key employee designated in accordance with 21a-421j-12 shall be responsible for ensuring access; (2) Inspect such place and all pertinent equipment, finished and unfinished material, containers and labeling, and all things in such place, including, but not limited to, records, files, financial data, sales data, shipping data, pricing data, employee data, research, papers, processes, controls, and establishments. Such inspection may include, but not be limited to, onsite audits or inspections by the Connecticut Agricultural Experimental Station; and (3) Inventory any stock of cannabis and obtain samples of any cannabis, labels, containers for cannabis, delivery devices, paraphernalia, and finished or unfinished material. (emphasis added)

State Personnel Regulations Section 5-240-1a(c) "Just cause" means any conduct for which an employee may be suspended, demoted or dismissed and includes, but is not limited to, the following:
13. Engaging in any activity which is detrimental to the best interests of the agency or of the state.

VII. INTERVIEWS AND INFORMATION GATHERED:

[This is an investigation summary; see investigation file for complete statements and relevant documents.]

DCP Referral for Investigation- email from Theresa Judge, HR Business Partner 3 to this investigator, dated March 24, 2025: *On behalf of DCP I am requesting a formal investigation into allegations of possible employee misconduct against Roderick [sic] Marriott. Specifically, on Thursday, March 20, 2025*

Roderick directed his drug control agents to perform a surprise inspection on a cannabis business, which directly followed the [General Law Committee Public Hearing](#) held the prior day, during which the business owner testified in opposition to DCP's position on a Cannabis bill. Rino Ferrarese is the business owner, and his testimony can be viewed beginning at timestamp 2:24:50.

Bryan Cafferelli, Commissioner of the Department of Consumer Protection was interviewed by Kristina Plyler, Agency Labor Relations Manager via MS Teams on March 28, 2025. Commissioner Cafferelli provided the following information:

Commissioner Cafferelli stated that he has been Commissioner since March 2023, and he previously worked as a lawyer in the Drug Control Division, which is how he first met Rodrick Marriott. Commissioner Cafferelli stated that Mr. Marriott is the Director of the Drug Control Division, and that Mr. Marriott reports directly to him. Commissioner Cafferelli shared that it is routine for the Drug Control Division to have unannounced compliance inspections, and that such inspections may be prompted by a credible complaint received by the division.

When asked about the March 20th unannounced compliance check on Affinity Grow, Commissioner Cafferelli said that he was made aware at 4:28 on March 20th, the day it happened. Later that evening, he had a conversation with Rodrick Marriott, Julianne Avallone and Maureen Magnan. During that call, Mr. Marriott stated that he had listened to Rino's testimony the night before and thought he heard Rino say that he was not conducting final form testing. Commissioner Cafferelli shared that Mr. Marriott further explained that the next morning he had a conversation with one of his supervisors in his division and told him that he should go and see if he was in fact doing the testing. Commissioner continued, "He went over the timeline, that there was a case opened by the supervisor who then dispatched the agents around 1pm and they were there about 45 minutes to an hour, and they didn't find anything wrong."

When asked how this action has impacted the Department of Consumer Protection, Commissioner Cafferelli opined that the agency has lost the trust and confidence of the cannabis industry, and that it has a chilling effect on those who may want to testify in a public hearing. Further, Commissioner Cafferelli noted a loss of goodwill with the General Law Committee, who were also upset that this action was taken the day after the business owner testified before them, resulting in Representative Lemar commenting on the issue the following day. Commissioner Cafferelli stated that the timing of this action was really bad and that the only way it should have happened was if there was an imminent threat to public safety.

Rodrick Marriott, Consumer Protection Drug Control Division Director, was interviewed via MS Teams by Kristina Plyler, Agency Labor Relations Manager on April 1, 2025. Mr. Marriott was accompanied by his representative, Caitlin Anderson. Mr. Marriott provided the following information:

Mr. Marriott stated that he has been the Director of the Drug Control Division for nine years, and he is responsible for the management of 73 employees in cannabis and pharmaceuticals and ensuring those products are maintained in a safe manner in compliance with Connecticut law. Mr. Marriott noted that

he generally works from 5:00 am to 5:00 pm, and that he works a hybrid schedule, reporting to the office 15-24 hours per week. Mr. Marriott stated that while there are no specific policies or procedures related to inspecting marijuana cultivators, there are statutes that provide the agency with access to the facilities at any time. Mr. Marriott stated that he, State Program Manager Jennifer Mandzuk, and any of the Principal Drug Agents could authorize an unscheduled inspection of a marijuana cultivator. Mr. Marriott explained that such inspections may be ordered if there is a complaint, allegation or a reported concern leading to a concern for public health or safety. Such communication could include that there is activity that is not in compliance with the law.

When asked about the unscheduled inspection of Affinity Grow on March 20, 2025, Mr. Marriott stated that the day before he was watching some testimony because he had heard there was some interesting testimony on the testing of cannabis. Mr. Marriott noted that he went back to look at it about 10 pm at night, that he did not watch the registrants' testimony in full as it was late at night. He started and stopped it and heard a line at the 2-hour 48-minute 9 second mark. At that point he heard Mr. Ferrarese say, "we are continuing what we are doing since 2014." Mr. Marriott stated that the agency has changed the testing standards over the years because they had concerns, and they had issues with this individual in the past with not complying with standards. He noted that he thought to himself, "we should probably take a look."

Mr. Marriott relayed that the next morning he spoke with Jennifer Mandzuk as he usually does about 8 am. Among other topics of discussion, Mr. Marriott shared that he brought up Mr. Ferrarese's testimony, stating, "I said I heard this thing in the testimony last night, I'm concerned that they are not compliant with final form testing, and I think we should take a look." Mr. Marriott noted that he did not find the testimony to be critical of the department; instead, the individual was just presenting their case on an issue they feel strongly about.

Mr. Marriott stated that he didn't hear anything about it again until 9:21 am when Ms. Mandzuk sent him a Teams message asking, "Should I send someone over today to check on final package testing?" Mr. Marriott responded, "I think so." He shared that he wasn't planning on having someone available on that Thursday, due to the heavy field schedules. However, he was concerned about public health and safety, and addressing those concerns is generally in the public's best interest. Mr. Marriott said that he didn't necessarily have a concern about them going that day because of the concern for public health and safety. Mr. Marriott stated that no concerns were identified at the inspection of Affinity Grow.

When questioned if there was anything that he would do differently, Mr. Marriott responded that it is a hard question to answer, stating, "If I heard this at any other time, I would do the same thing. It feels weird to say this, the only thing I would do differently is to hold off on the inspection for a time. The timing of the inspection seems to be the issue. My intent is not to prevent people from testifying at a public hearing, but if I hear something I have to act. There is a safety concern with the product going out without the standard testing. If a problem isn't detected early enough, there would be a recall. I

understand that there needs to be a balance. ...We are always balancing public health and safety, operator impacts, and politics. It's a sensitive maneuver. My staff did exactly what I asked them; I don't think they did anything wrong. Nor do I think I did."

Maureen Magnan, Deputy Commissioner, was interviewed on April 2, 2025, via MS Teams by Kristina Plyler, Agency Labor Relations Manager. Deputy Commissioner Magnan provided the following information:

Deputy Commissioner Magnan stated that she first became aware of the March 20th unannounced compliance check on Affinity Grow on March 20th sometime between 4 and 4:30 pm, when she received a call from the Governor's Office. After speaking with the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner Magnan spoke with Mr. Marriott, who acknowledged that the visit had occurred. When asked what Mr. Marriott said to her, Deputy Commissioner stated that Mr. Marriott told her that it was based on his interpretation of the testimony the day before. As Deputy Commissioner had not seen the testimony, she then watched it, and Mr. Marriott rewatched it. At that point, Deputy Commissioner stated Mr. Marriott realized that he misunderstood what he [Mr. Ferrarese] said. Mr. Marriott had thought the owner said that he was not abiding by DCP's regulations regarding product testing.

Julianne Avallone, Consumer Protection Legal Director, was interviewed on April 3, 2025, via MS Teams by Kristina Plyler, Agency Labor Relations Manager. Ms. Avallone provided the following information:

Ms. Avallone shared that she became aware of the March 20th unannounced compliance check on Affinity Grow a little after 5pm on Thursday, March 20th. At that time, Mr. Marriott sent her a Teams message Thursday evening, where he essentially said, "Uh oh, I think I messed up." Ms. Avallone did not have a conversation with Mr. Marriott at that time, but shortly afterwards she had a telephone conversation with the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner during which she learned more information.

Jennifer Mandzuk, State Program Manager, was interviewed on April 3, 2025, via MS Teams by Kristina Plyler, Agency Labor Relations Manager. Ms. Mandzuk provided the following information verbally and as a written document:

3/19 6:38pm – Rod sent me a link to the testimony on youtube [sic] and "-4.00 is where Rino starts." I was signed off for the day and did not see this until the morning. I signed on around 8am.

3/20 8:05am – Rod called me. We usually speak at this time to catch up on the happenings in enforcement. He asked if I had watched the testimony. I said that I had not yet had a chance. At some point in our conversation, Rod said that Rino was outright admitting that he was not performing final package testing. I mentioned that he had already been caught cherry picking samples a few months prior. We discussed potentially following up on the original case (2024-2818). It is standard in enforcement to open cases and investigate any complaints or allegations of non-compliance.

3/20 9:00am – I started my weekly AUC PA meeting with Thomas Baran, David Slomski and Ania Jankowski. We began the discussion with an update on pending investigations. The discussion with Rod was fresh on my mind, so I mentioned what he said about Rino admitting to not performing final package testing to the group and mentioned that we might want to visit Affinity/MCEJV sooner than later to follow up on case #2024-2818. I forwarded the video of Rino’s testimony that Rod shared with me to the three PA’s in our meeting chat, telling them that I had not had a chance to watch it myself yet. Ania offered to send Colleen Goosen to Affinity/MCEJV that same day, since she was available to go. Colleen had recently had some miscommunication issues with registrants, so I asked if Annie was available to go with her and assist. Ania said she was available, so I said, “let me just make sure Rod is okay with it.” Ania was getting ready to go on vacation and Melissa Antarsh was going out on FMLA, so with all of that in mind, it seemed to make sense to take advantage of the hole in their schedule.

3/20 9:21am –me to Rod: should I send someone over to Rino today? To check on final package testing. You good with that?

3/20 9:34am – Rod to me: “I think so.”

Shortly thereafter, I told Ania (still on a teams [sic] call for the AUC PA Meeting) that it was ok to open a case, assign to Colleen and Annie, and have them visit MCEJV to review the last lab pick-up. She ultimately opened case #2025-592.

3/20 1pm - Colleen and Annie went around 1pm. According to her schedule, she was there for only 1 hr.

3/20 4:00pm. I spoke with Colleen on the phone. She said she went to Affinity/MCEJV and viewed 2 recent lab pickups of items from multiple product categories. She said that he seemed to be testing his products compliantly. At this time, I still had not watched the video, so I was pleasantly surprised and said that I was glad he was testing his products compliantly. She mentioned that he was not putting his finished goods that were awaiting labeling in the vault and asked if that was okay. I explained that he had previously attended the secure location guidance meeting and should have been aware that these products need to be stored in an approved secure location. I suggested advising him to place his finished products in the vault and closing out the case.

3/20 4:43pm Rod called me on Teams and told me that it did not look good that we sent Colleen and Annie to Affinity/MCEJV. He explained that this was being mistaken as retaliatory enforcement. He pulled up the video at which time I finally watched it for myself. We both agreed that we did not hear what he originally thought he had heard, but were able to identify the point of confusion. Rino was suggesting a moratorium for final package testing where “they are just doing it the way they have always done” (talking about bulk testing) or something along those lines.

3/20 5:37pm – Rod asked me if I had talked to Colleen and Annie. I told him she was just advising him on finished products outside the vault and closing the case. He said not to provide him with an advisement. I immediately notified Colleen, who confirmed that she would not provide the advisement.

Ms. Mandzuk further stated that due to some staff having upcoming leave or vacation there was a hole in the schedule, and although there was no urgency, she was thinking that someone could go out. Ms. Mandzuk noted that Mr. Marriott responded to her 9:21 am Teams question at 9:24, “I think so.” Ms. Mandzuk stated that she took that to be a green light, however it may have been a miscommunication,

or it could have meant “Let’s talk about it more.” When asked if she had any concerns about conducting this inspection, Ms. Mandzuk shared that she and the Principal Agents discussed that maybe they shouldn’t do it right now, or maybe they should because if the owner is saying that he’s violating the law, the agents have a responsibility to check. Ms. Mandzuk said, “We thought it would look bad if we didn’t check. That’s why I ran it by Rod. This is why we stay out of the legislative process; we haven’t had any training per se on these situations.”

When asked if there was anything else that should be considered as part of this investigation, Ms. Mandzuk stated the following:

Every single one of us, from Rod down to the agents involved did not do this with any designs to retaliate. The only thing we have ever cared about is public health and safety. And everyone cares a lot about it. And that comes from Rod, from the top down. He is a fabulous leader who just has a lot on his plate.

Logic would say that we would have retaliated earlier, if we operated with poor ethics. There has been a lot of productive discussion around this subject with industry operators and we have never intentionally done anything to discourage anyone from speaking out about final product testing, or anything else for that matter, in the past. We do NOT retaliate ever. We simply do our job, which is enforce the law.

We all know that if the law changes it is our job to change with it. There are no feelings there. The laws change every year.

Rodrick Marriott, Consumer Protection Drug Control Division Director, was re-interviewed via MS Teams by Kristina Plyler, Agency Labor Relations Manager on April 4, 2025. Mr. Marriott provided the following information:

When asked what he meant when he had said there was some interesting testimony on the testing of cannabis, Mr. Marriott responded that it was about final product testing and that it was being challenged openly in that hearing. Mr. Marriott noted that he had heard from CJ Strand, the Legislative Director, that Mr. Ferrarese was testifying about final product testing.

When asked to clarify the timeline of events, on March 19th, Mr. Marriott stated that he quickly scanned the video of testimony while he was getting ready for dinner. He sent a chat to Ms. Mandzuk as a mark for himself to watch the testimony later, which he did around 10 10:30 pm. Mr. Marriott shared that he was interested in Mr. Ferrarese’s testimony because Mr. Strand had mentioned it earlier in the day.

Mr. CJ Strand, Legislative Director, was interviewed on April 8, 2025, via MS Teams by Kristina Plyler, Agency Labor Relations Manager. Mr. Strand provided the following information:

Mr. Strand confirmed that he observed the General Law Committee hearing in-person on March 19, 2025, noting that he did step out at one point, and he watched a recap on CTN. He also confirmed that he specifically mentioned Mr. Ferrarese's testimony to Mr. Marriott. His purpose in discussing Mr. Ferrarese's testimony was to gain knowledge about the testing, and to understand the pros and cons of what Mr. Ferrarese was proposing.

Additional Information Provided by Mr. Marriott. Letter from Mr. Marriott to this investigator dated 4/3/25; Fact Finding Response Supplement; Email for Affinity Meeting 1-7-25; Email dated 4/3/25 with 18 Attachments containing previous case information for Affinity Grow; Email dated 4/3/25 with additional information regarding cases with Affinity Grow; Email dated 4/3/25 with 7 attachments

Mr. Marriott provided additional written information which included documentation of a meeting held on January 16, 2025, with the Department of Consumer Protection and members of Affinity Grow regarding final form testing. Mr. Marriott shared that the meeting was similar in nature to the information provided in Mr. Ferrarese's testimony and noted that he did not find it to be hostile or antagonistic regarding final product testing. Mr. Marriott also wrote that there were no inspections performed as a result of the January 16th meeting.

Mr. Marriott provided documentation of DCP's previous regulatory involvement with Affinity Grow by providing Case View Screens for 18 inspections which were generated by complaints, in addition to five regular inspections. The screens include email correspondence between Affinity Grow and Drug Control.

Case View Screen for Case 2025-592, 3/20/25. This document shows that a complaint was received on 3/20/25 from Drug Control regarding Respondent MCEJV LLC (Affinity Grow), and the alleged issue was compliance violation. The comments indicate that the assigned agents were to check for compliance with the following from the Adult Use Policies and Procedures that went into effect on 01-01-2025: Section 21a-421j-29(e). The document reflects that the agents reviewed camera footage of laboratories picking up samples which demonstrated that sampling was performed compliantly, and the case was closed.

Audit Trail for DCP Case 2025-592 Inspection of Affinity Grow. Opened on March 20, 2025, at 10:09 am by C. Goosen.

Teams Messages between Rodrick Marriott and Jennifer Mandzuk from March 19, 2025, to March 20, 2025.

RM 3/19 6:38 PM YouTube link
-4.00 is where Rino starts

JM 3/20 9:21 AM: should i send some over to Rino today?

to check on final package testing
you good with that?

RM 3/20 9:34 AM i think so

Teams Message from Rodrick Marriott to Maureen Magnan, Thursday, March 20, 2025, 4:44 pm. “it appears that Rino is performing it correctly”

Teams Messages from Rodrick Marriott to Julianne Avallone on Thursday, March 20, 2025, including a message from Mr. Marriott to Ms. Avallone at 5:24 pm. “i [sic] thought i [sic] heard something in Rino’s testimony that i didn’t [sic] the full context of and asked my team to look into. i [sic] didn’t expect them to go today and i [sic] wasn’t clear that they shouldn’t”

General Law Committee Meeting Transcript, March 19, 2025, page 98, Rino Ferrarese, CEO Affinity Grow, testimony excerpt:

“So, what we’re actually doing, Representative, is we’re—Chairman, we’re basically the medical program operated with intermediate bulk testing from 2014 up until probably a couple months ago. So, we’re just continuing what we’ve been doing since 2014.”

Mr. Marriott stated that he heard this segment of Mr. Ferrarese’s testimony and incorrectly assessed that Affinity Grow was not conducting final form testing in compliance with current State guidelines. In reviewing the entire testimony, it is clear that Mr. Ferrarese was requesting a pause in the current standard of testing, final form testing, which he believed would revert to the same testing standards from 2014.

General Law Committee Meeting Minutes, Friday, March 21, 2025. Excerpt: Rep. Turco, on behalf of the chairs, reconvened the meeting at 12:39 PM. Rep. Turco then called the meeting back into recess until the call of the chair. Sen. Maroney reconvened the meeting at 1:54pm and Rep. Lemar and Sen. Maroney gave opening remarks. Both discussed the importance of transparency and open government. Rep. Rutigliano and Sen. Cicarella echoed the chair’s remarks.

<https://www.ct-n.com/ctnplayer.asp?odID=24564> **Video of General Law Committee March 21st Meeting Recorded On: 3/21/2025. Excerpt transcribed by this investigator:**

Chairman Lemar: “...I first want to say just a quick comment. We hosted a public hearing here on Wednesday, we had so many members of the public who were able to come out and join us and testify on a series of bills on our agenda. We invited a number of people to give us some expertise advice they had that we thought the committee would benefit from hearing. One of the individuals testified in a way that his testimony could have been misconstrued or misheard but it led to a subsequent action by the Department of Consumer Protection where he felt and this committee feels, inadvertently or purposefully, his business was put in jeopardy. It is our goal as a committee to be a place where constituents feel welcome coming here, opening up themselves to their expertise, to their knowledge, their sharing with us their challenges they face whether it’s as an individual in their home or a business that they’re running. Now you or I may not disagree with the individual who came here today, what he wanted to share with the committee, we may or may not agree with the business or the business model itself as a whole but it is my hope that this space, this place is seen as a place where people can come

and share those differing opinions and those differing ideas without fear. I have an expectation that I can offer that space here in this committee room. I failed to offer that space in this committee room. While I don't necessarily think that fault was mine, this was a space I invited people to, so I hold that as a failing. I've had incredible conversations with the leadership of the Department of Consumer Protection. It has been made clear to me that this action was unacceptable and in no way inherent within the department itself. I have complete faith and commitment from Commissioner Cafferelli who I have grown to really enjoy and think he's doing a superb job. And I have complete confidence that this will not happen again and this situation will be rectified internally."

VIII. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:

This investigation found that:

- Mr. Marriott has the authority to initiate unscheduled compliance checks at facilities that produce, manufacture or store cannabis products.
- On March 19, 2025, at approximately 10:00 pm Mr. Marriott listened to Mr. Ferrarese's testimony at a public hearing for the General Law Committee in part and believed that he heard Mr. Ferrarese say that he is not testing his products to current standards when he said, "we are continuing what we are doing since 2014."
- On March 20, 2025, at approximately 8:00 am, Mr. Marriott discussed his concerns with State Program Manager Jennifer Mandzuk. Both thought that they should look into the matter as a concern for public safety, although neither had watched Mr. Ferrarese's testimony in full.
- On March 20, 2025, at 9:21 am, Ms. Mandzuk messaged Mr. Marriott on Teams and asked if she should send someone to Mr. Ferrarese's facility that day. Mr. Marriott responded, "I think so." Neither had yet watched Mr. Ferrarese's testimony in full.
- Mr. Marriott believed that there was a concern about public health and safety based on his interpretation of Mr. Ferrarese's testimony, which was that Mr. Ferrarese was not testing his products in compliance with State regulations.
- Mr. Marriott did not perform his due diligence by listening to Mr. Ferrarese's testimony in full; if he had done so, he would have heard the full context of Mr. Ferrarese's testimony and would not have the mistaken belief that Mr. Ferrarese stated that he was not testing his products in compliance with State regulations.
- Mr. Marriott exhibited poor judgment in permitting the compliance check to take place the day following Mr. Ferrarese's testimony at a public hearing without taking into consideration the potential for negative impacts to the Department of Consumer Protection.
- There were negative impacts to the Department of Consumer Protection as the inspection of Mr. Ferrarese's facility was seen as retaliatory and the General Law Committee spoke to the potential chilling effect such perceived retaliation could have on other members of the public exercising their rights by testifying at public hearings.

On Monday, March 24, 2025, Theresa Judge, HR Business Partner 3 sent this investigator an email requesting a formal investigation into allegations of possible misconduct by Rodrick Marriott.

Specifically, on March 20, 2025, Rodrick Marriott directed his drug control agents to perform a surprise inspection on Affinity Grow, a cannabis business, which directly followed the General Law Committee Public Hearing held the prior day, during which the business owner, Rino Ferrarese, testified in opposition to DCP's position on a cannabis bill.

The investigation was initiated on March 27, 2025, and was conducted via employee interviews, a review of relevant documentation provided by employees of the Department of Consumer Protection, a review of the General Law Committee transcripts, minutes and televised proceedings, as well as a review of relevant State statutes and regulations.

The events that gave rise to this investigation began on Wednesday, March 19, 2025, on which date the legislative General Law Committee convened a public hearing. According to the Connecticut General Assembly website, www.cga.ct.gov, the "General Law Committee has cognizance of all matters relating to the Department of Consumer Protection, fair trade and sales practices, consumer protection, mobile homes and occupational licensing, except licensing by the Department of Public Health; and all matters relating to alcoholic beverages." The committee is chaired by State Senator James Maroney and State Representative Roland Lemar; the committee is comprised of two vice chairs, two ranking members, and 14 members from the House and Senate.

Mr. Rino Ferrarese, President of Affinity Grow, submitted testimony regarding House Bill 7178 An Act Concerning Cannabis, Hemp and Tobacco Regulation and then presented his testimony in-person on March 19, 2025. During his testimony, Mr. Ferrarese requested a pause on final form testing based on his expertise as a microbiologist and research. As a potential compromise, Mr. Ferrarese proposed a 12-month pause and the creation of an advisory council to develop revised testing standards and policies. During his oral testimony, Mr. Ferrarese made the following statement: *So, what we're actually doing, Representative, is we're—Chairman, we're basically the medical program operated with intermediate bulk testing from 2014 up until probably a couple months ago. So, we're just continuing what we've been doing since 2014.*

Mr. Rodrick Marriott, Consumer Protection Drug Control Division Director, has been employed by the Department of Consumer Protection since June 20, 2008. He began his employment as a CP Drug Control Agent and was promoted to Division Director on April 29, 2016. At the time of his investigatory interview on April 1, 2025, Mr. Marriott reported having 73 people under his management and working 12 hours per day regulating pharmacies, controlled substance providers and manufacturers, as well as the state's marijuana industry. On April 9, 2025, DCP implemented a planned removal of the oversight and enforcement of the marijuana industry from the Drug Control Division, and from Mr. Marriott's supervision.

A review of the information provided by all parties of the investigation shows that Mr. Marriott's explanation for the reason behind the compliance check on Affinity Grow remained consistent. He claimed that the agency's Legislative Director had specifically mentioned Mr. Ferrarese's testimony and that the testimony was regarding final form testing, and this statement was confirmed by Legislative Director CJ Strand. Mr. Marriott stated that he had begun to watch the testimony on the evening of

March 19th and had watched it in bits and pieces, hearing Mr. Ferrarese say, “So, we’re just continuing what we’ve been doing since 2014.” In hearing this sentence out of context, Mr. Marriott erroneously interpreted it to mean that Mr. Ferrarese was not complying with final form testing. This interpretation was further supported by his past experience with Mr. Ferrarese not complying with standards.

Mr. Marriott then discussed the matter with Ms. Mandzuk, who also raised past concerns about Mr. Ferrarese, and together they considered the possibility of following up on a previous case. The basis for Mr. Marriott’s concern, as supported by Ms. Mandzuk’s testimony, was public health and safety, which could be at risk if Affinity Grow did not test their product in compliance with regulatory requirements. Ms. Mandzuk provided a thorough account of all of her communication with Mr. Marriott regarding Mr. Ferrarese’s testimony and the subsequent decision to conduct the compliance check, and her account, as well as the accounts provided by Commissioner Cafferelli, Deputy Commissioner Magnan and Mr. Marriott are all consistent. Further, Mr. Marriott was forthcoming and cooperative with the investigation into his decision, and there has been no reason to question his credibility. Mr. Marriott has been employed for almost 17 years and has no record of discipline or performance issues.

As the Drug Control Division Director, it is Mr. Marriott’s responsibility to coordinate, plan and manage the division’s activities, to include inspecting cannabis facilities. The Regulations of CT State Agencies grants DCP the authority to enter at reasonable times any place in which cannabis is held, dispensed, produced and manufactured. The actions Mr. Marriott took in conducting a compliance check on Affinity Grow were within his purview as Drug Control Division Director.

The Department of Consumer Protection requested an investigation to determine if Mr. Marriott engaged in misconduct by ordering a surprise compliance check on Mr. Ferrarese’s business in response to him testifying in opposition to the agency’s position on a cannabis bill. Information provided in the investigation found that Mr. Ferrarese previously shared his opposition to final form testing with DCP with no resulting regulatory action. In fact, a review of 18 regulatory cases with Affinity Grow reflects a professional and respectful relationship between the Drug Control Division and Mr. Ferrarese and Affinity Grow.

Instead, it was what Mr. Marriott thought was an admission of non-compliance that triggered the regulatory action on March 20, 2025. In any other time or place, a registrant admitting to not complying with testing standards would trigger a compliance check to ensure the health and safety of the public. Further, it is standard for compliance checks to be unannounced in order to evaluate the normal day-to-day operations of a business. If Mr. Marriott had listened to Mr. Ferrarese’s testimony in full prior to discussing it with his staff, he would have realized that the sentence he heard the night before was lacking context, and did not indicate that Mr. Ferrarese was non-compliant with testing regulations. But for this misinterpretation, the compliance check would not have occurred. Instead, Mr. Marriott listened to a snippet of Mr. Ferrarese’s testimony late at night and discussed it with Ms. Mandzuk at 8 am the next day, which led to the initiation of the compliance check. The compliance check found that Affinity Grow was conducting final form testing in compliance with current regulations and the case was closed.

Mr. Marriott's actions are indicative of a performance concern. He did not perform his due diligence by listening to Mr. Ferrarese's testimony in full; if he had done so, he would have heard the full context of Mr. Ferrarese's testimony and would not have the mistaken belief that Mr. Ferrarese stated that he was not testing his products in compliance with State regulations. Mr. Marriott also exhibited poor judgment in permitting the compliance check to take place the day following Mr. Ferrarese's testimony at a public hearing without taking into consideration the potential for negative impacts on the Department of Consumer Protection. In the end, Mr. Marriott's lapse in judgment and actions resulted in a poor public perception of the Agency.

There were detrimental impacts to the Department of Consumer Protection as the inspection of Mr. Ferrarese's facility was seen as retaliatory, as indicated by media reports, and the General Law Committee spoke to the potential chilling effect such perceived retaliation could have on other members of the public exercising their rights by testifying at public hearings.

Although Mr. Marriott took action that was within the purview of his role as the Director of the Drug Control Division, he did not ensure that his decision was based on a clear understanding of Mr. Ferrarese's statement. Rather, he heard one sentence out of context and acted. Further, this action resulted in the public perception of retaliation and negatively impacted the Department of Consumer Protection. Mr. Marriott's actions are inconsistent with the expectations of his position.

IX. CONCLUSION

Mr. Marriott's poor judgment in executing the responsibilities of his position in this matter was detrimental to the best interests of the Agency and meet the standard of proof under State Personnel Regulations Section 5-240-1a(c) 13. Engaging in any activity which is detrimental to the best interests of the agency or of the state.

The matter is referred to the Agency for corrective measures they deem appropriate.