



May 1, 2023

Representative Kelly Moller, Chair  
Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee  
Minnesota House of Representatives  
479 State Office Building  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Senator Ron Latz, Chair  
Judiciary and Public Safety Committee  
Minnesota State Senate  
3105 Minnesota Senate Building  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Moller and Chair Latz:

Thank you for the opportunity allowing Clergy for a New Drug Policy to weigh-in on specific legislation included in the House and Senate versions of the Omnibus Judiciary and Public Safety Finance bills, SF2909.

We are an organization of faith leaders from a variety of religious traditions committed to ending a culture of punishment and treating drug use as the public health issue it is. We know that harm reduction is an evidence-based public health strategy for addressing harms related to substance use. We also believe it is rooted in values consistent with our faith traditions as it demonstrates compassion, respect for human dignity and a commitment to helping people wherever they are.

The House version of the Omnibus Judiciary and Public Safety Finance bill includes HF2041 (Gomez)/SF2261 (Oumou Verbeten), a bill that authorizes syringe services to possess, distribute, and dispose of syringes; authorizes the hypodermic syringes and changes to the state statute related to drug paraphernalia (See House version, Article 16, Sections 1-6 and 13-15).

We are pleased to see HF2041's language included in the Omnibus Judiciary and Public Safety Finance bill as drug paraphernalia policy should be focused on saving lives and reducing the risks of overdose.

History has shown that harsh penalties for drug use and paraphernalia does nothing to help people and only worsens the tragic overdose crisis. Tougher laws and sentences around drug paraphernalia results in more death, avoidable diseases, and creates greater risks when individuals seek drugs and drug paraphernalia in the illicit market, particularly impacting low-income people and communities of color. These drug paraphernalia laws also threaten to punish nonusers involved in harm reduction activities.

The legislation, as it now stands, allows Minnesota to move forward with allowing syringe services providers to operate under and within defined parameters as well as decriminalizing drug paraphernalia and residues contained therein. These changes will undoubtedly reduce



harm and save lives of Minnesotans and we urge the conference committee members to support the inclusion of HF2041.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to the conference committee.

Sincerely,

Timothy McMahan King  
Senior Fellow, Clergy for a New Drug Policy  
[www.newdrugpolicy.org](http://www.newdrugpolicy.org)

C: Rep. Jamie Becker-Finn  
Rep. Sandra Feist  
Rep. Cedrick Frazier  
Rep. Brion Curran  
Sen. Clare Oumou Verbeten  
Sen. Sandra Pappas  
Sen. Judy Seeberger  
Sen. Bonnie Westlin