

Testimony of Ken Winters, PhD. regarding opposition to the House cannabis legalization bill, HF100

March 7, 2023

Members of the Economic Development Finance and Policy Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony regarding cannabis bill HF100.

I am Ken Winters, PhD., a long-time drug abuse researcher, with 20 years as a professor in psychiatry at the University of Minnesota. I co-founded Smart Approaches to Marijuana Minnesota, which is the state affiliate of the national group, Smart Approaches to Marijuana. I am very knowledgeable about the research and science of cannabis use.

I appreciate the work of the bill's authors. The complexity of commercializing cannabis requires thoughtful debate on many levels related to health and the economy.

There are now over 20,000 scientific articles in the published literature that consistently point to one major conclusion: Using cannabis greatly increases the risk to the user of numerous health and safety problems. Major reviews from the National Institute on Drug Abuse and the National Academy of Sciences detail numerous harms from cannabis use, including disruptions in cognitive functioning and impaired driving. Studies in states that have passed cannabis legislation have consistently reached the conclusion that commercializing cannabis contributes to an increase in workplace safety. As an international panel of experts wrote in 2021 (Fischer et al., 2021, *International Drug Policy*), "there is no universally safe level of cannabis use; thus, the only reliable way to avoid any risk for harm from using cannabis is to abstain from its use."

HF100 does not help Minnesota's economy. The various restrictions of testing for cannabis is not favorable to Minnesota's businesses. Passage will increase the percentage of citizens who use cannabis, including underage youth. How will increased prevalence of cannabis use contribute to a healthy workforce?

If there are concerns that our state over-criminalizes cannabis users, then decriminalize it and expunge the records of those convicted of a minor possession. If the medical marijuana program is not affordable or accessible, then fix that program.

Thank you for your attention to my written testimony.

Ken C. Winters, Ph.D.  
winte001@umn.edu

Falcon Heights, MN