



February 16, 2021

Commerce Chair Zack Stephenson and Committee Members,

My name is Tony Chesak and I am the Executive Director of the Minnesota Licensed Beverage Association. The MLBA has been a non-profit trade association that has represented liquor license holders at both the on and off sale levels since 1953. The MLBA has testified in the Commerce Committee for many years, so I know you all have a good understanding as to who we are and to whom we represent.

I am drafting this letter to your committee in support of HF 600. As you know, the requirements and qualifications of dispensing alcohol have inherent risks and liability. All liquor license holders in Minnesota must maintain certain liquor liability insurance coverages. Some of those are called Dram Shop policies. These policies protect the consumer from a myriad of risks. Every liquor license holder in Minnesota has been vetted by having their criminal history and financial backgrounds looked over and they are even reviewed for their moral standing.

Allowing liquor licensees to obtain marijuana dispensary licenses makes sense. No, we are not advocating that alcohol and recreational cannabis be sold in the same retail space, but by allowing these qualified businesses to legally sell them makes sense. Our industry already sells age and regulatory sensitive products such as alcohol and tobacco. Liquor licensees also have to train new and existing employees annually in all aspects of the responsible sale of these controlled substances. We have the most qualified owners and staff in the state to handle the sale of recreational cannabis.

In closing, we would like to be considered as strong candidates to sell recreational cannabis and related products once they are made available for legal sale. There would be no need for additional background checks to our license holders as that has already been done at the local, county and state levels. You trust us to sell existing products that are highly regulated. This would be a safe, smart and balanced approach to the legal sale of recreational cannabis.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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