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Letter of Support: HF100 Cannabis Legalization

Dear Chair Stephenson and Members of the House Commerce Cmte,

The ACLU of MN is a long standing organization devoted to preserving the individual rights and liberties enshrined in our constitution and laws.

The ACLU of MN is in support of the HF 100. Cannabis laws desperately need reform due to the stark racial disparities in marijuana possession arrests and the fact that they haven't gotten better in Minnesota or nationwide. Nationally, on average, a Black person is 3.6 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than a white person, even though Black and White people use marijuana at similar rates. Here in Minnesota, it's an even bigger problem: a Black person is 5.4 times more likely to be arrested than a white person, which is significantly worse than the national average.

The disproportionate targeting and over-policing of Black communities for a substance that is equally used among the population is the logical consequence of marijuana criminalization and the by-product of the failed war on drugs. Being caught with even the smallest amounts of marijuana can risk your housing status, employment opportunities, child custody determinations, immigration status and eligibility for financial aid. It can ruin lives.

HF 100 is a viable path toward responsibly legalizing marijuana use and possession for Minnesota adults. It has strong provisions that don't simply replace marijuana prohibition with onerous fines and fees that can disproportionately affect marginalized families. It also provides clemency or resentencing for certain marijuana convictions and expungement of past marijuana convictions.

We sincerely hope that the legislature takes quick and serious action on moving this issue forward. Full legalization would stop further arrests for possession, decrease prison populations, and reduce the criminalization of Black and Brown communities in our legal system.

ACLU-MN urges you to support HF 100.

Thank You,

Munira Mohamed

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