

April 13, 2021

I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to offer this written testimony on HF600. My name is Ken Winters, Ph.D. and I am a member and Research Advisor to Smart Approaches to Marijuana Minnesota (SAMMn; www.sammn.org).

SAMMn supports decriminalization and expungement for possessions of small amounts of marijuana. We believe that this should be a civil penalty and not a criminal matter. And we are very supportive of Minnesota's drug courts; they provide an excellent alternative to treatment and recovery to those who struggle with substance use issues. But there is no need to commercialize cannabis to achieve changes to decriminalizing marijuana possession.

Then there is the issue of monitoring. The current statute suggests that an outside firm will be hired to monitor all marijuana industry components. We think this is a lot like the fox guarding the hen house. Monitoring is a huge issue and has not been done very successfully in other states. Oregon admitted last year that in five years of legalization they had inspected less than 3% of their gross sites and 3% of their retail operations (<https://www.opb.org/news/article/oregon-marijuana-audit-weak-regulations-lack-inspectors/>). Marijuana grown in Minnesota will need to be grown indoors in order to attain the levels of THC the industry is now producing, and doing so will lead to very humid grow sites and the risk of developing plant mold. In one inspection in Colorado, 80% of the inventory was confiscated because of these conditions. We are extremely skeptical that a third-party vendor will serve the best interest of the citizens of Minnesota.

Last, we are concerned with the Creation of the Marijuana Management Board. It is not clear who this board reports to other than the Governor. Further, the makeup of the board has very little representation from the health community. There only seems to be just 1 position from public health, mental health, substance use or toxicology. Given the increasing addictiveness of high potency THC, this means that the Board may have no or very minimal background in drug prevention and treatment. Also, there are no members of public safety on this board, which is a significant omission given the evidence that highway fatalities associated with THC positive drivers will increase after commercialization. A recent study has projected an increase of 16% of marijuana related fatalities across the country (<https://www.cmaj.ca/content/193/14/E481>).

Like the recent statement from the AMA (<https://www.ama-assn.org/about/leadership/questions-still-surround-cannabis-use-and-public-health>) we believe more studies need to be completed and more information gathered before Minnesota passes a law that will cause public health harms and make Minnesota less safe. We urge you to vote No on this Bill.

Sincerely,

Ken Winters, PhD.

Research Advisor, SAMMn

Retired Professor, Dept. of Psychiatry, University of Minnesota