

May 7, 2025

Members of the Higher Education Conference Committee:

On behalf of NAMI Minnesota, we are writing with concerns about funding cuts for the Cannabis Research Center in the School of Public Health at the University of Minnesota. The Senate position cuts \$6.5 million for cannabis research. As the recreational cannabis industry is about to hit Minnesota, we are bracing for some of the impacts.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) states “Cannabis affects brain development. Developing brains, such as those in babies, children, and teenagers, are especially susceptible to the harmful effects of cannabis and tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) because the brain is continuing to develop until around age 25... Using cannabis before age 18 may affect how the brain builds connections for functions like attention, memory, and learning. Cannabis's effects on attention, memory, and learning may last a long time or even be permanent, *but more research is needed to fully understand these effects*.”<sup>1</sup>

We also know that cannabis use poses particular risks for people who may experience psychosis. Research has shown that “Regular cannabis use predicts an increased risk of schizophrenia, and the relationship persists after controlling for confounding variables.”<sup>2</sup> We are writing because we believe these risks are real. As the recreational market opens, it is certain that some young people will use cannabis. Minnesota law and research are clear that there are risks even until age 25. It follows that some young person may have a detrimental and even life-altering episode.

The research center is important for both prevention and intervention. The truth is that our mental health system is not fully built yet, and as young people will have more access to cannabis in our state, we owe it to them to use and provide scientifically verified information on the real potential impacts of cannabis use.

Now is not the time to cut funding for cannabis research in a public health program. We urge the committee to please consider those whose lives are impacted by mental illnesses and do not cut this funding. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Sue Abderholden, MPH  
Executive Director

Elliot Butay  
Senior Policy Coordinator

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/cannabis/health-effects/brain-health.html>

<sup>2</sup> Hall, W., & Degenhardt, L. (2008). Cannabis use and the risk of developing a psychotic disorder. *World psychiatry : official journal of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA)*, 7(2), 68–71. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2051-5545.2008.tb00158.x>