

May 7, 2025

Re: Urging the committee to include the CRC in the higher education bill/budget



Dear Higher Education Conference Committee members:

I am writing on behalf of Tobacco-Free Alliance, a Twin Cities nonprofit organization with the mission to prevent youth from using commercial tobacco, prioritizing communities adversely affected by industry marketing and health disparities. As leaders in commercial tobacco prevention, we urge you to support continued state funding for cannabis research at the University of Minnesota's Cannabis Research Center (CRC). The CRC plays a critical role in providing evidence-based insights that directly inform our efforts to prevent youth nicotine and cannabis use.

- **The CRC's research is foundational to our tobacco prevention work, especially as nicotine and cannabis use are increasingly interlinked.** Dual use is common among youth, and understanding how cannabis legalization influences this trend is vital to designing effective prevention strategies.
- **Without state funding for cannabis research, Minnesota will lose essential data collection and analysis** that help us understand how cannabis legalization impacts communities statewide, including youth exposure, use patterns, and access.
- **We risk a major reduction in independent, science-based research** on the public health impacts of cannabis, which is necessary to protect Minnesotans, particularly young people, from unintended harms.
- **Local and state agencies, including tobacco prevention organizations, depend on CRC data** to adapt quickly to the evolving landscape of legal cannabis. Their research helps us develop cross-cutting strategies that respond to new forms of product marketing, retail access, and youth-targeted trends.
- **With retail cannabis stores opening soon, timely research is crucial.** The CRC is uniquely positioned to study cannabis accessibility and its relationship to underage use, helping ensure that youth are not the unintended targets or victims of this new industry.

The CRC is answering urgent questions about cannabis and legalization impacts. These questions not only matter to researchers but also to public health professionals, parents, educators, and lawmakers working to promote youth well-being.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elyse Levine Less".

Elyse Levine Less, JD, MPH  
Executive Director, Tobacco-Free Alliance

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