



May 7, 2025

RE: HF 2431 – Higher Education Finance and Policy – Cannabis Research Center

Chair Rarick, Chair Wolgamott, Chair Fateh, and Members of the Conference Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Local Public Health Association of Minnesota, a statewide association representing more than 250 member public health leaders of city, county and Tribal public health departments across the state. LPHA requests that the conference committee adopt the House language to retain funding to support the University of Minnesota's Cannabis Research Center (CRC) in the final Higher Education Omnibus bill. This center is essential to ensure Minnesota makes informed, data-driven decisions as adult-use cannabis becomes legal and regulated.

The CRC is an asset to our state's public health infrastructure. It is currently dedicated to studying the health, behavioral, and societal impacts of cannabis legalization. Without this center, we will experience a significant gap in the data collection and analysis necessary to understand how cannabis legalization affects communities across Minnesota—particularly as retail cannabis stores prepare to open.

Local public health departments across the state are facing a fast-evolving landscape. The CRC has already proven to be a crucial partner by providing evidence-based information, technical assistance, and clarity on the implications of adult-use cannabis legalization. Without it, we will be left with fewer resources to respond effectively to a changing landscape of substance use in our communities.

As public health professionals, we are particularly concerned about the loss of CRC's unique capacity to conduct timely, localized research. National data alone cannot tell us how legalization is affecting our communities. The center's work enables a nuanced understanding of cannabis use patterns, including use and misuse among youth, and helps us shape prevention and harm-reduction efforts accordingly.

Retaining the Cannabis Research Center is not only a wise investment in research—it is a proactive step to protect public health and support state and local decision-makers in this time of transition. Thank you for your consideration and leadership.

Sincerely,

Kari Oldfield-Tabbert, Executive Director