

Dear Higher Education Conference Committee,

I am writing to you today in my capacity as Commercial Tobacco Health Equity Project Outreach Coordinator for Sub-Saharan Africa Youth and Family Services in Minnesota (SAYFSM). I strongly advocate for the continued funding of cannabis research at the University of Minnesota within the Higher Education budget. The Cannabis Research Center (CRC) plays a crucial role in addressing critical needs within our state.

The impending opening of retail cannabis stores in Minnesota underscores the urgent need for the CRC's research. Their timely data collection and analysis will be invaluable in understanding the impact of legalization on cannabis access and usage patterns, particularly among young people. This evidence-based approach is essential for developing effective public health strategies.

Furthermore, the CRC's Equity and Engagement team is uniquely positioned to reach Minnesotans disproportionately affected by the historical criminalization of cannabis. Their targeted outreach efforts will ensure that vital information about cannabis reaches those communities most in need, promoting education and mitigating potential harms.

Finally, the CRC provides much-needed clarity and expertise on the complexities of cannabis legislation to state agencies, organizations, researchers, and the public at large. Their work contributes significantly to informed policy-making and public understanding.

I understand the budgetary constraints the Committee faces. However, I urge you to prioritize the continued funding of cannabis research at the University of Minnesota. This investment is vital to the health, safety, and well-being of all Minnesotans. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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