

Maria K. Poirier, M.D. Testimony on H.F. 100/S.F. 73 Cannabis Omnibus bill

February 21, 2023

Madam Chair and members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony in opposition to the Cannabis bill. My name is Maria Poirier, and I am an internal medicine physician from Rochester.

This bill as currently written is a poisoning hazard. It allows packaging with colorful graphics that are attractive to persons under age 21. It allows tasty cannabis edibles including root beer taffy and fruit-flavored gummies that are attractive to hungry toddlers. This bill allows the sale of delta-8 THC despite FDA warning bulletins. Frankly, it's safer to have my dog's heartworm pills in the house than THC edibles. To reduce poisoning risk, packaging should be opaque, colored black or white with block lettering and no graphics. All individual edibles should be contained in opaque single dose-packs that require opening with a scissors to release the product.

Please pay close attention to the submitted *MDH Trends in Hospital-treated Cannabis Poisonings* handout. A record number of Minnesotans were poisoned the 3rd quarter of 2022, which corresponds to legalization of hemp-THC edibles July 1st. Adults and kids < 5 had the largest increases.¹ The hospitalization spike in Q3, Q4 of 2019 was likely due to hemp-THC products made available after passage of the 2108 U.S. Farm Bill. Pandemic effect likely caused decreased hospitalizations in 2020.

Canadian data published last month shows that after legalizing recreational cannabis in 2018 to 2021, pediatric poisoning hospitalizations due to cannabis increased 5-fold overall with a 2-fold increase in provinces that legalized edibles compared to the province that did not.² The increase in poisonings occurred despite strict packaging and dosage regulations and extensive educational campaigns. The hospital experience for kids poisoned by cannabis is terrifying. Children may suffer from confusion, seizures, hallucinations, and require ICU support.³ Children have died from cannabis poisoning.^{4,5,6}

¹ See submitted document: Trends in hospital-treated cannabis poisonings among Minnesotans

² Myran DT, Tanuseputro P, Auger N, Konikoff L, Talarico R, Finkelstein Y. Pediatric Hospitalizations for Unintentional Cannabis Poisonings and All-Cause Poisonings Associated With Edible Cannabis Product Legalization and Sales in Canada. *JAMA Health Forum*. 2023;4(1):e225041.

³ Shaker K, Nillas A, Ellison R, Martin K, Trecki J, Gerona R, Aldy K. Delta-8-Tetrahydrocannabinol Exposure and Confirmation in Four Pediatric Patients. *J Med Toxicol*. 2023 Feb 9. doi: 10.1007/s13181-022-00927-x. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 36757578.

⁴ <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/5-things-know-about-delta-8-tetrahydrocannabinol-delta-8-thc>

⁵ <https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/21/us/virginia-mother-childs-death-thc/index.html>

⁶ Nappe, T. M, & Hoyte, C. O. (2017). Pediatric Death Due to Myocarditis After Exposure to Cannabis. *Clinical Practice and Cases in Emergency Medicine*, 1(3). <http://dx.doi.org/10.5811/cpcem.2017.1.33240>

Edibles aren't the only products sending users to the ER. Let me tell you about a patient I saw last summer. He's a 70-year-old healthy man from Illinois on blood pressure medication who went to an outdoor concert. Someone in the crowd offered him a (legal) joint. After taking a few puffs, his blood pressure dropped, he passed out, head hit the concrete, then transported to the ER for treatment of a scalp laceration and concussion. The patient didn't realize that cannabis potency today is 7 times higher than in the 70's.

Cannabis is not "safer than alcohol" as the industry may argue. Impairment due to THC can last up to 8-12 hours depending on mode of delivery, dosage, individual tolerance, genetic differences in drug metabolism, and whether you eat it with a high fat meal such as burgers and fries.⁷ Cannabis related adverse events may cause significant morbidity depending on age, dosage, frequency of use, drug interactions, cognitive reserve and co-existing medical conditions.⁸ Because THC and other chemicals derived from cannabis may cause serious adverse events including hospitalization and death⁹, cannabis products should be regulated by the FDA under pharmaceutical standards-not by state regulators.¹⁰

Despite the known negative impact of cannabis on mental and physical health, the [342.03] CANNABIS ADVISORY COUNCIL membership does not include medical professionals other than a substance abuse expert. I recommend amending the bill to include physicians board-certified in pediatrics, internal medicine, geriatrics, occupational medicine and clinical pharmacology. I notice that there are 11 council members supporting the cannabis industry and its employees.

No amount of regulation or wishful thinking will change the predictable outcome if Minnesota legalizes recreational cannabis. More children will be poisoned, more teens and young adults will become addicted, and more seniors will hit the concrete.

I urge you to vote NO. Thank you.

Maria K. Poirier M.D., F.A.C.P.

mariatonymn@hotmail.com

Volunteer, Smart Approaches to Marijuana Minnesota

⁷ Spindle TR, Martin EL, Grabenauer M, Woodward T, Milburn MA, Vandrey R. Assessment of cognitive and psychomotor impairment, subjective effects, and blood THC concentrations following acute administration of oral and vaporized cannabis. *J Psychopharmacol.* 2021 Jul;35(7):786-803. doi: 10.1177/02698811211021583. Epub 2021 May 28. PMID: 34049452; PMCID: PMC9361180.

⁸ Khoury R, Maliha P, Ibrahim R. Cannabis Use and Misuse in Older Adults. *Clin Geriatr Med.* 2022 Feb;38(1):67-83. doi: 10.1016/j.cger.2021.07.003. PMID: 34794704.

⁹ See submitted document: Cannabis effects on adults and seniors

¹⁰ Poirier MK. Cannabis use in Minnesota, cautions and suggestions for change in cannabis statutes. *Minnesota Medicine Magazine.* Sept/Oct 2022

