



February 17, 2021

Dear Members of the House Commerce Finance and Policy Committee:

On behalf of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective on HF 600 (Rep. Winkler), legislation seeking to legalize the recreational use of marijuana. As you know, the Minnesota Chamber is a statewide organization representing more than 6,300 businesses – and more than half a million employees – throughout Minnesota. The majority of our members are small and mid-sized businesses.

First, the message we carry on behalf of our members this session is clear: Minnesota’s economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic must be the top priority for the 2021 Legislative Session. Re-opening the economy and managing the continued economic fallout due to the pandemic is one of the top concerns of Minnesota businesses. A “do no harm” approach is critically important so that additional cost burdens and mandates are not placed on employers who are doing their best to keep their doors open and people employed.

Legalizing recreational marijuana, which remains an illicit, controlled substance under federal law, is not something that our members believe should be prioritized at this critical time. There is also no established consensus or guidelines on a marijuana impairment standard and there is no contemporaneous and reliable testing method for marijuana intoxication. As countless numbers of employees in Minnesota are required to safely operate vehicles and machinery, we disagree with the assertion by the bill’s author that “impaired driving is a relatively smaller harm compared to the harms we’re creating through prohibition.”¹

The Minnesota Chamber supports the establishment of a Task Force to analyze and understand the full scope of public health, safety, criminal justice, societal, workplace, taxpayer, state and economic costs and ramifications of legalizing recreational marijuana in Minnesota and for Minnesotans. This Task Force should include representation from Minnesota’s business community and its findings must incorporate employers’ perspective, including how to reconcile existing deficiencies in marijuana diagnostic standards and testing capabilities against any new obligations that would be placed on employers due to legalization.

As the legislature continues to debate this proposal, our members believe that employers should be protected by clear provisions allowing the right to enforce company drug policies or zero-tolerance policies that maintain safety and productivity as well as manage compliance with appropriate federal drug laws. More work needs to be done to ensure employers can maintain the right to determine a drug policy that best fits their operational, safety, and culture needs rather than conform to a one-size-fits-all state mandated drug policy.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns about HF 600 and efforts to prematurely legalize the recreational use of marijuana in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Lauryn Schothorst

Director, Workplace Management and Workforce Development Policy

1. <https://minnesota.cbslocal.com/2021/01/04/push-to-legalize-marijuana-in-mn-gains-momentum-but-faces-opposition-in-senate/>