

LEGACY
glassworks



Testimony- Commerce Committee - HF 600

Hello, my name is Josh Wilken-Simon and I own Legacy Glassworks; a successful business with two glass galleries and a studio: one in Duluth and one in Minneapolis. I have been in business over ten years and serve as co-chair of the Lyn-Lake Business Association and am a member of the Duluth Great Downtown Council. I support HF600.

I started my business in 2009 at 21 years old with \$200 from my part-time grocery store job. For the last decade we have only sold glasswork from US artists, with an emphasis on Minnesota artists. The industry is currently dominated by cheap Chinese glass pipes often being produced in slave labor worksites. I am very proud to be the first and only shop in Minnesota that has never, and will never, sell this imported glass.

While growing my business, I have worked diligently towards making my community a better place. My business has sponsored annual winter clothing drives, silent auction charity events, and community glassblowing demonstrations. I have also become deeply immersed in the business communities in both Metro areas, with a goal of assisting aspirational business entrepreneurs. Looking at states across the county which have legalized cannabis, one major issue is painfully obvious: big business dominates all aspects of the cannabis marketplace. HF600 delineates a specific plan that ensures small craft businesses are able to succeed post-legalization.

I believe the most important component of HF600 is the establishment of the Office of Social Equity detailed in Sec 2. The Office of Social Equity will be tasked with providing grants, not only to promote economic development in the communities hardest hit by prohibition, but also to ensure the resources are available to prevent violence and help these communities thrive in all aspects. Over the years of work with the business associations I have seen and heard time and time again that access to capital is the biggest barrier to starting a business. We know that entrepreneurs of color have a much more difficult time accessing capital. This is absolutely unacceptable. The grants provided by the Office of Social Equity will ensure that communities of color that have been impacted the most through prohibition will be able to receive the assistance they need in order to start businesses in this new marketplace. This is a great first step in righting the wrongs of prohibition. Thank you for your time.

Josh Wilken-Simon
Owner: Legacy Glassworks
Co-Chair: Lyn Lake Business Association
2/17/21

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Josh Wilken-Simon".