

January 11, 2022

TO: Rep. Zack Stephenson
Chair of the Commerce Finance and Policy House Committee

FROM: Juventino Meza
West Saint Paul, MN

RE: Testimony in support of the Omnibus Cannabis Bill HF100 so non-US citizens are protected

Dear Chairman Stephenson and members,

My name is Juventino Meza and I am an undocumented Minnesota. I am also in my last semester of law school at Mitchell Hamline. Today, I express my hope that the House File 100 Omnibus cannabis bill becomes law so that many of the injustices committed under the veil of the war on drugs are addressed in some capacity.

I also want to share my experience working as a paralegal in immigration law in California where cannabis is legal and the serious risks, including deportation, non-US citizens face when states legalize cannabis and why Minnesota cannot make the same mistakes as other states, MN ensure that this law includes safeguards to protect non-US citizens.

If Minnesota decriminalizes cannabis, under federal law, cannabis will continue to be considered a Schedule 1 Drug. Federal law governs immigration eligibility, including permanent residency and citizenship. In essence, while cannabis will be legal in Minnesota (and medical marijuana is legal already), it will continue to be illegal under Federal law for immigration law purposes.

The Federal government has also provided warnings about non-US citizens involved in the cannabis industry:

- Violation of federal controlled substance law, including for marijuana, established by a conviction or admission, is generally a bar to establishing Good Moral Character for naturalization even where the conduct would not be a violation of state law.
- An applicant who is involved in certain marijuana related activities may lack Good Moral Character if found to have violated federal law, even if such activity is not unlawful under applicable state or foreign laws.

More is available here:

<https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/policy-manual-updates/20190419-ControlledSubstanceViolations.pdf>

This legislative proposal should include safeguards to protect Minnesotans who are not non-US citizens and employers and producers in understanding the risks and serious consequences someone like me may face.

Thank you for your time.

Juventino Meza
West Saint Paul