

I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to present this testimony on HF600. My name is Judson Bemis and I Chair Smart Approaches to Marijuana Minnesota. I am also a person in long term recovery. Marijuana is an addictive drug; Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD) is listed in the DSM 5 right next to alcoholism, gambling and other use disorders. Marijuana was my drug of choice and my long-term recovery means that I have not smoked marijuana for 32 years.

First, let me start with the easy stuff. SAMMn supports decriminalization and expungement for possessions of small amounts of marijuana. We do believe that this should be a civil penalty and not a criminal matter. We do think that there also needs to be some form of escalating response so that a second or third offense may lead to stronger action. We are very supportive of Minnesota's drug courts and think they provide an excellent alternative to treatment and recovery to those who struggle with substance use issues. There is no need to commercialize cannabis to achieve this.

Second is the issue of monitoring. The current statute suggests that an outside firm will be hired to monitor all marijuana industry components. We think this is a lot like the fox guarding the hen house. Monitoring is a huge issue and has not been done very successfully in other states. Oregon confessed last year that in five years of legalization they had inspected less than 3% of their gross sites and 3% of their retail operations (<https://www.opb.org/news/article/oregon-marijuana-audit-weak-regulations-lack-inspectors/>). Marijuana grown in Minnesota will need to be grown indoors in order to attain the levels of THC the industry is now producing. In addition to requiring huge amounts of energy and water it is very common to use fertilizer sometimes pesticides and because of the very humid nature of the grow site mold develops. In one inspection in Colorado 80% of the inventory was confiscated because of these conditions. We are extremely skeptical that a third-party vendor will serve the best interest of the citizens of Minnesota.

Last, we are concerned with the Creation of the Marijuana Management Board. It is not clear who this board reports to other than the governor and we wondering why there needs to be a completely new agency created for marijuana. Further, the makeup of the board has very little representation from the health community. There only seems to be just 1 position from public health, mental health, substance use or toxicology. Given the increasing addictiveness of high potency THC this means that that position may have no substance use or treatment background. Also, there are no members of public safety on this board which will be of growing concern given the significant increase in fatalities of driving under the influence of marijuana. A recent study has projected an increase of 16% of marijuana related fatalities across the country (<https://www.cmaj.ca/content/193/14/E481>).

Like the recent statement from the AMA (<https://www.ama-assn.org/about/leadership/questions-still-surround-cannabis-use-and-public-health>) we believe more studies need to be completed and more information gathered before Minnesota passes a law that will cause irreparable harm to our adolescents and make Minnesota less safe. We urge you to vote No on the Bill.