

March 25, 2024
Testimony in Favor of HF 4789

Dear Chair Stephenson and Members of the Committee:

My name is Timothy Casey. I am a pharmacist who currently works in Minnesota's medical cannabis program. I am also the author of the petition accepted by the Office of Medical Cannabis in 2023 to add dry herb vaporizers as an approved consumption method in the medical cannabis program. **I write today in support of HF 4789, the physician's choice bill.** In my opinion, there are two main reasons for supporting this bill.

The first reason this bill should be passed is that it will reduce patient confusion. I have worked with many patients who have come into the medical program much later than they would have otherwise, due to the fact that they had incorrectly excluded themselves from the program not realizing that their diagnosed medical condition would, in fact, qualify for treatment with medical cannabis. An example of this was when I recommended a friend of my parents to talk to his physician about joining the program for diabetic neuropathy. He correctly pointed out that diabetic neuropathy is not an approved condition. I then explained that diabetic neuropathy *would* actually qualify him under the definition of chronic pain.

I am convinced that if I wasn't a pharmacist in the program and there to make him aware of his options and encourage him to talk to his physician, he would still be self-excluded from the program today. I believe there are many patients like him who would be interested in asking their physician, but do not do so out of a misunderstanding of a limited list of qualifying conditions with no additional context.

The second reason this bill should be passed is philosophical continuity. With the adult-use bill that was passed last year, we as a state came together and decided that adults in Minnesota should have access to cannabis with or without a recommendation from their physician. Other states with adult-use programs, particularly Maryland, Colorado, Massachusetts, and Missouri, have followed this line of thought. In a state that has adult-use cannabis for sale, patients' access to medical cannabis should be prioritized. I do not see how it makes sense for a government agency to decide for a physician whether their patient's condition or symptoms would be benefited by cannabis or not. This determination should be made based on the physician's best judgment as a medical professional. It would be awfully bizarre to me if my mom could walk into an adult-use dispensary and buy a product at the recommendation of her physician, but not necessarily be able to walk into the medical dispensary I work at and buy that same product with that same recommendation.

In order to make things clearer for patients and physicians, and to just stay philosophically consistent, I ask that you vote yes on this bill. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Timothy Casey
Pharmacist
RISE Medical Cannabis Dispensary – Eagan, MN