Testimony of Ken Winters, PhD. regarding H.F. 100, Omnibus cannabis bill

January 11, 2023

Rep. Zack Stephenson and members of the House Commerce Finance and Policy Committee

Thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony in opposition to the cannabis bill, H.F. 100.

I am Ken Winters, PhD., a long-standing research in drug abuse, with 25 years of it while a professor in psychiatry at the University of Minnesota. I also co-founded Smart Approaches to Marijuana Minnesota; we are the state affiliate of the national group, Smart Approaches to Marijuana. I am very knowledge about the science of cannabis use as it relates to health and safety.

There are now over 20,000 peer reviewed science articles that consistently point to one major conclusion: Using cannabis greatly increases the risk to the user of numerous health and safety problems. For studies that have compared states, the undeniable conclusion is that commercializing cannabis contributes to deleterious effects on its citizenry.

There are no legislative controls, conditions or guardrails that will make legalization a rational decision. Once a drug is legalized and thus normalized, it’s increased popularity will lead to more use by more Minnesotans, and the work place and highways will be less safe. Regulating it will not eliminate the black market, as other states have learned. If there are concerns that our state over-criminalizes cannabis users, then decriminalize it and expunge the records of those convicted of a minor possession.

A summary list of safety and health issues is provided on pp, 2 and 3 of this letter.

I urge the committee to oppose H.F. 100.

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**Based on Lessons Learned from Other States and Published Scientific Research, What Are the Likely Effects of Commercializing Cannabis?**

**Users of cannabis, particularly users of high potency THC, will increase their likelihood of ....**

Developing a cannabis use disorder 1-8

Progression to use other drugs 9

Suffering from severe and persistent mental disorder 1, 2, 10-14

Damaging brain development during adolescence 1, 2, 14-18

Deficits in learning, memory and IQ 2, 9, 16-21

Poorer functional well-being, including derailment by youth of transition to adulthood 9, 13, 19, 21-22

**State-wide, we will likely see...**

Higher prevalence rates of cannabis use by youth and adults 4-8

Greater strain on mental health and related social services 1, 2, 10-14

Greater proportion of motor vehicle accidents linked to cannabis intoxication 23-26

Increase in emergency room visits because of acute overdose reactions 26-27, 30

Less safe workplace 26

**State-wide, we will likely NOT see...**

Lower opioid abuse rates 26, 28-29

Enough tax revenue to cover attendant social and health costs 26

Reduction in crime 26

citations on page 3

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