

I am writing in support of the bill to legalize Cannabis. I am supportive of this as I am one of the many sufferers of autoimmune disease in Minnesota, specifically Celiac disease. I received my diagnosis 1.5 years ago after years of poor health and several medical procedures and tests. Unfortunately, I am in my late 30s and a lifetime of an untreated disease has left me with both physical (infertility, fatigue, joint pain, intestinal damage, inflammation) and mental (anxiety, brain fog, panic issues, insomnia) damage that I continue to experience despite following a strict gluten free diet. Additionally, I am one of the many that is in the process of seeing if some of my symptoms are linked to another autoimmune disease, which is a common occurrence for celiac patients. For people who receive diagnosis after the age of 20, there is a 34% increased chance of developing another autoimmune disease (<https://celiac.org/about-celiac-disease/related-conditions/autoimmune-disorders/>).

Legalized cannabis could help someone like me with both the physical and mental impacts I suffer, in some cases safer and more effectively than how I am forced to manage today.

For the physical pain, cannabis could help my inflammation issues which is one of the main drivers of the pain I live with in my joints, nervous system and intestinal tract. As the medical journal article: "Cannabinoids as novel anti-inflammatory drugs" concludes 'The cannabinoid system has been shown both *in vivo* and *in vitro* to be involved in regulating the immune system through its immunomodulatory properties.' and 'Cannabinoids have been tested in several experimental models of autoimmune disorders such as multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, colitis and hepatitis and have been shown to protect the host from the pathogenesis through induction of multiple anti-inflammatory pathways.' (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2828614/>)

The mental pain is often related to celiac disease: 'Anxiety, depression and fatigue are common complaints in patients with untreated celiac disease and contribute to lower quality of life. While aspects of these conditions may improve within a few months after starting a gluten-free diet, some patients continue to suffer from significant psychological morbidity. Psychological symptoms may affect the quality of life and the dietary adherence.' ("Psychological morbidity of celiac disease: A review of the literature" <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4406898/>). While I am fortunate enough to pay for mental medical care that includes three different pharmacological drugs to treat my illness, this was not an easy or safe path for me. Currently, the USDA does not require pharmaceutical companies to disclose the use of gluten as a binding agent. In fact, after receiving my first anxiety medication, I had a sharp decline in health, including the intestinal symptoms common with Celiac disease. It took calls to the company of my pill by both my doctor and pharmacist to realize the generic (that was covered by my medical plan) was bound together using gluten and in turn was making me ill on a daily basis and setting back my healing process. One benefit of being able to use cannabis to help with my anxiety and insomnia problems would be I know exactly what is in it and have no concerns of whether something I was taking was poisoning me with gluten. Another symptom that could be helped with the use of cannabis would be the Brain Fog that comes from accidentally being glutened: <https://www.beyondceliac.org/research-news/brain-images-show-damage/>.

In conclusion, while legalized cannabis is not a cure call to my chronic and serious autoimmune disease, it is something that could safely provide me solutions to problems. I would greatly appreciate the option to include this as an avenue to treatment for myself instead of being off limits and a criminal act.

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