

April 20, 2021

Dear Members of the Education Finance Committee:

NAMI Minnesota urges you to be cautious when considering legalizing recreational cannabis consumption. While there are many positives in this legislation – particularly the expungement of low-level cannabis possession charges – more needs to be done to ensure that Minnesota youth are aware of the risks associated with cannabis use. Cannabis is not a benign substance and is risky for young people. NAMI Minnesota is particularly concerned about the connection between cannabis use and psychosis among young people, the impact of cannabis use on the developing adolescent brain, and memory and cognitive impairment.

Despite the risks associated with young people using cannabis, the U.S. Surgeon General reported in 2019 that high school students' perception of the harm from regular cannabis use has been steadily declining over the last decade. Minnesota must immediately begin efforts to educate young people on the risks of regular cannabis use. NAMI Minnesota supports the preliminary work in HF 600 on this issue - including developing model cannabis education curriculum for middle and high school students in Article 7, Sec. 3. HF 600 also calls on the Department of Health to work with young people to raise awareness about the adverse health risks of regular cannabis use, which will hopefully include the connection between psychosis and cannabis use. However, it will be necessary to appropriate funding to ensure that these important educational efforts are successful, even if Minnesota does not move forward with the legalization of recreational cannabis use this year.

The potency of cannabis is increasing, and it is more available than ever. Neighboring states like South Dakota voted in support of cannabis legalization, while other states are seriously considering legalization. Minnesota needs to take steps now to equip young people with the knowledge to make an informed decision on cannabis use. NAMI Minnesota appreciates the efforts being made by Rep. Winkler to work with the mental health community to mitigate the unintended consequences of cannabis legalization for people with mental illnesses. We look forward to additional collaboration on other issues including potency limits for edible doses, tweaking language around the studies to track the mental health impact of cannabis legalization, and additional investments in mental health services like the First Episode Psychosis program to meet the increasing need for mental health services that will come with cannabis legalization. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sue Abderholden, MPH  
Executive Director

Sam Smith  
Public Policy Coordinator



April 22, 2021

Dear Members of the House Education Finance Committee:

On behalf of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective on HF 600 (Rep. Winkler), legislation seeking to legalize the recreational use of marijuana. As you know, the Minnesota Chamber is a statewide organization representing more than 6,300 businesses – and more than half a million employees – throughout Minnesota. The majority of our members are small and mid-sized businesses.

First, the message we carry on behalf of our members this session is clear: Minnesota’s economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic must be the top priority for the 2021 Legislative Session. Re-opening the economy and managing the continued economic fallout due to the pandemic is one of the top concerns of Minnesota businesses. A “do no harm” approach is critically important so that additional cost burdens and mandates are not placed on employers who are doing their best to keep their doors open and people employed.

Legalizing recreational marijuana, which remains an illicit, controlled substance under federal law, is not something that our members believe should be prioritized at this critical time. There is also no established consensus or guidelines on a marijuana impairment standard and there is no contemporaneous and reliable testing method for marijuana intoxication. As countless numbers of employees in Minnesota are required to safely operate vehicles and machinery, we disagree with the assertion by the bill’s author that “impaired driving is a relatively smaller harm compared to the harms we’re creating through prohibition.”<sup>1</sup>

The Minnesota Chamber supports the establishment of a Task Force to analyze and understand the full scope of public health, safety, criminal justice, societal, workplace, taxpayer, state and economic costs and ramifications of legalizing recreational marijuana in Minnesota and for Minnesotans. This Task Force should include representation from Minnesota’s business community and its findings must incorporate employers’ perspective, including how to reconcile existing deficiencies in marijuana diagnostic standards and testing capabilities against any new obligations that would be placed on employers due to legalization.

As the legislature continues to debate this proposal, our members believe that employers should be protected by clear provisions allowing the right to enforce company drug policies or zero-tolerance policies that maintain safety and productivity as well as manage compliance with appropriate federal drug laws. More work needs to be done to ensure employers can maintain the right to determine a drug policy that best fits their operational, safety, and culture needs rather than conform to a one-size-fits-all state mandated drug policy.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns about HF 600 and efforts to prematurely legalize the recreational use of marijuana in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

**Lauryn Schothorst**

Director, Workplace Management and Workforce Development Policy

1. <https://minnesota.cbslocal.com/2021/01/04/push-to-legalize-marijuana-in-mn-gains-momentum-but-faces-opposition-in-senate/>

To the Hon. Committee Members

Hello Members, my name is Chad Hewitt, a registered Republican from St. Paul, Mn. I would first like to start by saying "Thank You for this opportunity". Now, Americans are putting ALL politicians on notice. We are sick and tired of politicians across the board and keep in mind elections are around the corner. So, I do have concerns about the cannabis industry in Mn. A quick background on me. Born in the early 70's and a DARE child. I come from a community serving family and was against cannabis and went down the law enforcement/EMS route. I was fortunate enough to work at both the private and state-run correctional facilities here in MN. I also had the distinct pleasure of serving on two rural EMS services and a metro area Sheriff's Office reserve unit. I have also had the unpleasant experience of doing CPR on my 4-month-old nephew, helping a rural medical examiner remove and exam a family of 3 involved in a fiery crash, as well as the person that caused it; plus, other events. During those years I battled with neck pain and PTSD's. Then in 2007, I had neck surgery that left me with continued pain, a metal plate and screws in my neck. I was prescribed several different medications; 2 different opiates(long & short acting), NSAIDS, different muscle relaxants, anti-depressants and a few others. I became physically addicted to the opiates; and the muscle relaxants put me into outer space where I could barely function. The addiction affected EVERY aspect of my life(couldn't pay bills, missed family events and work). I was forced to resign a beloved job; I hide the addiction rather than admitting it, and now am a product of "the system". Then a changing point in my life. While going through bad withdrawals, a friend gave me cannabis. I was able to get on the medical cannabis program. I have been on/off the program due to cost & selection. With the help of cannabis, I am down to 1 opiate(and a fraction of that dose, and hope to be off completely within 6-8 months) and med. cannabis. Cannabis has allowed me to work at getting my life back and have learned a ton about it. People in the middle class and lower CANNOT afford and/or don't like MN's program. Extremely expensive and extremely selective medications, and in my opinion poor quality. MN's' medical program IS NOT WORKING. People ARE FORCED TO THE UNCONTROLLED BLACK MARKET and WILL CONTINUE to use it until it is legal. Just look at the Vape cart issue a few years back; When people were having lung issues due to people adding contaminants. With cannabis legalization coming to our borders; NOW is the time to make sweeping economic and social equity changes to benefit Mn. H.F. 600 is the best fit for Mn and this country. S.F. 1179 and associated bills will do little to nothing to help Mn. However, it will benefit the two current dispensaries and some of the patients. As to the big organizations that oppose cannabis, they have a vested interest and they have the time and money to pay lobbyist to oppose it. But yet, if they did a completely random and surprise drug test on their organization members, there would be a good percentage that would test positive for THC. Those members will not openly admit they use or support cannabis. They want to keep their jobs just like politicians do. We all don't want minors to obtain or be exposed to cannabis. We strongly support money going to the educational system and for public education. I know most cannabis users would support tax money going to the Dept of Education for educating future generations about the truth of cannabis, Dept Health and Human services for research and support, Public Safety to enforce cannabis laws, Dept. of Ag. to educate and support farmers. There is a multitude of industries that support the cannabis industry. In closing, please support H.F. 600 it allows for safe and responsible use of cannabis both medically and recreationally. Feel free to contact me with any questions, the committee administrator has my email.

Thank you for your time.

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