Hello Mr. Brown

I am writing today to request to submit written testimony in favor of HF 100 at the Commerce Committee today at 1pm.

I am currently an Assistant Professor at the University of Minnesota performing clinical research in the psychiatry department on trauma, mental health, and substance use disorders. I have also been a recreational cannabis user for the majority of my adult life. I moved here to Minneapolis from California in 2017, and was sad to move to a state that did not have legal cannabis, as we did in California. I was delighted when the edible cannabis law was passed this past summer, and I appreciated being able to consume cannabis again legally.

As a scientist, researcher, and user, I can tell you the benefits of legalization will do far more good than harm. Being able to legally consume cannabis takes a lot of fear out of the equation and has been the best form of harm reduction, having lived in a state that saw both sides of that spectrum. I personally do not like drinking alcohol, and find cannabis to be a safer and less toxic way to relax and enjoy myself when I want to unwind or enjoy activities with friends and family.

While cannabis may have some risks for certain populations, such as a developing brain/mind, and those predisposed to psychosis, this "drug" is far less harmful to the health and safety of its users than other legal drugs, such as alcohol and tobacco. I often reference the immense harms caused by alcohol use, which is a completely legal drug that isn't even under the DEA controlled substances act. Tobacco is also not regulated under the DEA, and in fact both of these legal drugs are regulated under the same agency that regulates deadly weapons, such as guns and explosives. The harms of the war on drugs is far more harmful than legal, regulated access, in my expert opinion.

Cannabis/Marijuana, is completely safe for the majority of people who use it. Making it legal doesn't pose any greater risk to public health and safety than access to alcohol and cigarettes do, and in fact pose less of a risk, including the lack of evidence that it contributes to significant health issues or overdose, which both alcohol and tobacco do, yet somehow those are allowed to reign as the only acceptable forms of recreational alterations of consciousness.

Cannabis/Marijuana should be legalized for adult recreational uses in Minnesota. Additionally, the economic benefits to the community will greatly help marginalized communities, such as BIPOC and low-income residents that are over-policed for cannabis use, possession, cultivation, and distribution. Legacy growers and distributors should have priority over business licences under this new legalization bill, and all non-violent cannabis related crimes and criminal records should be expunged and reparations granted to help them build back up their livelihood in this industry. Other states that have legalized cannabis have not followed this and the businesses that are thriving still end up benefiting the privileged class, while ignoring the harms that have been caused to those communities that have suffered the most from marijuana being criminalized.

In conclusion, I fully support this bill and hope that you'll do the right thing and legalize recreational cannabis in Minnesota under HF 100.

Very Best,

Jessica L. Nielson, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor