

Testimony of Ken Winters, PhD. regarding the cannabis legalization bill, SF 73

February 11, 2023

Members of the Senate Transportation Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony regarding cannabis bill SF 73.

I am Ken Winters, PhD., a long-standing research in drug abuse, with 20 years of it while a professor in psychiatry at the University of Minnesota. I co-founded Smart Approaches to Marijuana Minnesota, which is the state affiliate of the national group, Smart Approaches to Marijuana. I am very knowledgeable about the research and science of cannabis use.

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. As an international panel of experts wrote in 2021 (Fischer et al., 2021, *International Drug Policy*), "there is no universally safe level of cannabis use; thus, the only reliable way to avoid any risk for harm from using cannabis is to abstain from its use."

And there are hundreds of research publications concluding that use of cannabis impairs cognitive and psychomotor functions, two important skills related to safe driving. Two states that have monitored highway safety, Colorado and Washington, have seen a dramatic increase in THC positive highway fatalities after commercialization.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has identified 10 different types of driving skills. Alcohol impairs 7 of them and cannabis impairs 6 of them. When a driver is intoxicated under the influence of both alcohol and cannabis, all 10 driving skills are impaired.

A research team that included scientists in CO and WA state conducted a controlled study that used a validated measurement procedure concluded that "psychomotor impairment emerges immediately after acute cannabis" and can last for more than one hour (Karoly et al., 2022; *Cannabis and Cannabinoid Research*).

As the committee may know, standard approaches for identifying impairment due to cannabis exposure (i.e. blood THC and field sobriety tests) have severe limitations. Do committee members know that there is not yet a validated system that can reliably and accurately detect cannabis impairment at the roadside? The bill's offering of a pilot test regarding highway safety would not be informative given the knowledge and technology limitations.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my perspectives.

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