

## **Testimony of Randy Bacchus regarding SF73, Omnibus cannabis bill**

February 21, 2023.

Ms Chair, Senator Wiklund, and members of the Health and Human Service. Thank you for allowing us to submit written testimony in opposition to the cannabis bill, SF73.

### **My name is Randy Bacchus, and I am here in opposition of SF73**

This bill is written by and supported by an industry that stands to profit from addiction.

My wife Heather and I are the parents of a forever 21-year-old son who died because of cannabis-induced psychosis and completed suicide on July 17th, 2021.

Unlike those this bill, we do not have a financial interest.

What we do have is personal interest given our experience, and now a greater awareness of how harmful Cannabis truly is. We want to prevent others from experiencing the horrible outcomes from high potency THC.

I am here on behalf of Minnesotans that deserve better, and for all those families and loved one struggling with addiction, and mental health that are fearful to come forward.

Our son, Randy started using cannabis at the age of 15, and it was readily available. He believed cannabis was beneficial, and sadly, he was wrong.

At 16, he was diagnosed with a severe Cannabis Use Disorder and was sent to Wilderness Therapy.

At age 18 he moved to Colorado, a legal use state.

At 19, he had his medical marijuana card and took cannabis in its various forms – flower, vapes, dabs, and edibles.

With use, he suffered anxiety and depression, and eventually became grandiose, paranoid, and delusional.

In March of 2021, he went into full-blown psychosis believing the mob was after him and that his phone and computer were being bugged – Cannabis caused all of that.

In April of 2021, he reported to the police that he was suicidal, and he was admitted for a 3 day hold in the psychiatric hospital.

Although he marked in each of the 5 boxes on his intake that he was suicidal, after 24 hours he was released due to a shortage of beds.

3 months later, he completed suicide. Cannabis caused that.

### **What happened? Here is a quick lesson in Cannabis, Marijuana and THC**

THC is the cannabinoid that gets users high.

In the '60's, 70's, 80's and 90's, marijuana flower contained anywhere between 2-5% THC. Commercialization has evolved the marijuana plant creating strains that contain 25% THC on average, with retailers selling strains up to 35% THC. So much stronger than it used to be.

THC is extracted from the cannabis flower, leaving a highly potent product, This concentrate can be put into anything to create a marijuana-infused product, gummies, chocolates, drops, and more that can be vaped, eaten, or drank. Potency can exceed 90% THC.

Dabs are small amounts or “blobs” of cannabis extracts, with names like wax, shatter, batter, honey, and many more, with potency up to 99%.

One “dab” is equivalent to 4-5 joints, which results in an off-the-chart high.

It's scientifically proven that High Potency THC damages the developing brain, and causes psychosis, suicidal ideation, anxiety, and depression in adolescents and young adults.

When THC comes into the brain, it disrupts brain development.

**Why is this important?** Because the brain is not developed until the age of 25 for females and 28 for males.

You might think our scenario is an outlier, and rare. I am here to tell you that it is not...

- In 2020, an estimated 14.2 million people had a cannabis use disorder.
- 3 out of 10 Cannabis users develop a Cannabis Use Disorder.
- In 2021, an estimated 30.7% of 12 graders reported using cannabis in the past 12 months, with 6.3% of them using it daily.
- Parents who use marijuana increase the likely hood that their children will use and misuse marijuana, tobacco, and alcohol.

For 8 years, the New York Times called for cannabis legalization, but in June 2022, the Times published a long article headlined “Psychosis, Addiction, Chronic Vomiting: As Weed Becomes More Potent, Teens Are Getting Sick.”

HF 100 has a legal age use of 21, and doesn't cap THC potencies. Legalization will make it more accessible and youth will think that legalization equals safe, many will suffer the terrible effects of the normalization of cannabis.

In a legal use state, our son reported he was suicidal, and he did not get the help he desperately needed..

Our youth are already struggling, and mental health systems are already overwhelmed.

**Do you want to normalize a psycho-active drug that is addictive, causes anxiety, depression, paranoia, psychosis, and if not stopped eventually schizophrenia?**

Is Minnesota prepared for the increased need and demand for health services that will be needed with legalization?

What will the cost be – not only monetarily, but socially and emotionally?

Think about your loved ones, and please think with your heart and your mind, and vote with your conscience.

We can do better.

We can create social justice by decriminalizing and expunging records, but we do not need to commercialize and normalize another damaging substance – Today's marijuana, cannabis, and weed.