



Testimony from Gracie Johnson  
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Last Prisoner Project

**RE: Last Prisoner Project Calls on Minnesota Legislature to Prioritize Criminal Justice Measures in Legalization Bills HF 100 and SF 73 This Session**

January 24, 2023

Dear Members of the Committee,

When a state legalizes adult-use cannabis, it is acknowledging that public interest has shifted on the criminalization of cannabis. The magnitude of this shifting perception is clear in the landscape of national legalization, as adult-use cannabis is now legal in 21 states. However, simply repealing the prohibition of cannabis is insufficient: millions of individuals across the U.S. still bear the lifelong burden of having a cannabis record, and tens of thousands are actively serving sentences for cannabis-related convictions.

In order to adequately address the past harms of cannabis criminalization, legalization must provide retroactive relief through state-initiated record clearance and resentencing. We were thrilled to see that Minnesota's HF 100 and SF 73 contemplate mechanisms for both of these processes, and encourage the legislature to prioritize their inclusion.

State-initiated record-clearance is an evidence-based policy that is key to redressing the lasting harm caused by cannabis criminal records and the significant and lingering barriers they impose to success. Similarly, state-initiated resentencing is a cornerstone of comprehensive cannabis policy, providing a pathway to relief for individuals whose continued incarceration will no longer be in the interests of justice.

While HF 100 and SF 73 provide for both of these priorities, the provisions should be improved to ensure full relief to those harmed by the War on Drugs. We have provided detailed feedback to the Committee outlining how best to improve these criminal justice-related provisions, and look forward to continuing to support Minnesota in successfully accomplishing a justice-informed pathway to cannabis legalization.