

April 29, 2025

Senator John Marty  
Chair, Senate Finance  
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3235  
95 University Avenue West  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator Eric Pratt  
Ranking Minority Member, Senate Finance  
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 2217  
95 University Avenue West  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Marty, Senator Pratt and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I am submitting this written testimony to ask you to maintain funding for the Cannabis Research Center (CRC) at the University of Minnesota. CRC funding is not included in the current version of the Senate Higher Education Committee omnibus bill.

The CRC was funded through an appropriation in the 2023 legislation that legalized cannabis for adult use. The CRC has initiated or funded more than 15 research projects since it launched in October 2023—all while building the CRC infrastructure.

CRC core research projects have included assessment of: (1) the likelihood of illegal sales of hemp products to underage youth (note: 56% of stores sold to young appearing buyers without ID in 2023), (2) the association between cannabis use and cardiovascular outcomes, (3) the percent of cannabis users who have used cannabis at work or while driving, and (4) the types of products being used by youth, college students, and the general public. These data will serve as baseline data to assess effects of full legalization of cannabis. All projects were focused exclusively on Minnesota.

The CRC is now fully staffed and ready to conduct even more research. This research will inform cannabis legalization implementation, assess the potential positive and negative effects of cannabis and cannabis legalization in Minnesota, and continue to investigate the research areas included in the legislative charge (i.e., prevention and treatment of substance use disorders, equity issues, education, and decriminalization). The CRC's research is critical as Minnesota begins to open cannabis dispensaries throughout the state.

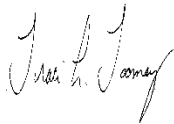
Being funded with state dollars enables the CRC to be nimble and do independent cannabis research that is timely and specific to Minnesota. For example, in response to a request for help

from a staff member from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), the CRC surveyed school support staff (e.g., school nurses, social workers) to find out what cannabis-related issues they were dealing with among their students and what their cannabis-related training needs are. MDE is using this information to guide their work with schools.

Funding from the state also helps the CRC pull in researchers with different expertise throughout the University to focus on cannabis. Through the CRC small grants program, the CRC funded several projects focused on a range of topics including: (1) accessibility of cannabis among cancer patients; (2) cannabis use prevalence among individuals prescribed metformin; (3) dosage, efficacy, and adverse effects related to medical cannabis, and (4) developing new protocols and technologies for quality assurance of cannabis products. We are about to review nine new applications from our most recent Requests for Applications. We hope to have the funds to support many of these new research projects.

I would be happy to share information about our amazing team, the critical research we are conducting, and the strong collaborations we have built (e.g., with the Minnesota Department of Health and local public health). Our goal is to provide value to Minnesota and to be an independent and trusted source of information for elected officials, agencies working on cannabis legalization, and the public. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Traci L. Toomey', written in a cursive style.

Traci L. Toomey, PhD

Professor

Director, Cannabis Research Center

School of Public Health

[Toome001@umn.edu](mailto:Toome001@umn.edu)

612-327-2382