

Testimony on Senate Bill 1420
Senate Appropriations Committee
Human Services Division
March 15, 2021

Chairperson Lee and members of the Committee:

My name is Patti Senn and I am a Licensed Master Addiction Counselor in North Dakota. I am providing written testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 1420, which provides for the legalization of recreational marijuana. I urge this committee to have an honest discussion on how legalized marijuana will impact our state and its citizens. Marijuana legalization is not without significant consequences.

Three main points I wish to highlight:

1. Marijuana (Cannabis) is an addictive substance. A study published by The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) in 2019 indicates that states that enact Recreational Marijuana Laws result in increased use and diagnosis of Cannabis Use Disorder. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) reports that approximately 30% of cannabis users have a Cannabis Use Disorder.
2. Workforce Issues: Legalization will likely result in employers having an even greater difficulty in hiring and maintaining an adequate workforce.
3. Cannabis Use and Mental Health Issues: there are over 20,000 peer-reviewed research articles linking cannabis use to severe mental health conditions that range from depression and anxiety to psychosis. In an era where significant emphasis is being placed on improving the behavioral health of our state, I find this legislation counterproductive. The National Institute of Health states that regular use can change one's brain in significant ways that impact one's learning and memory. This is especially true for those whose brains are still developing, which continues into a person's late 20's.

Finally, any discussion on marijuana legalization should coincide with a discussion on a significant investment and funding for substance use disorder education, prevention and treatment services.

Respectfully,

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