

April 7, 2025

Testimony in Support of House Bill 1596

Chairwoman Larson and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

My name is Kimberlee J. Hegvik, and I am the elected State's Attorney in Cass County. Prior to my election in 2022, I served as an Assistant Cass County State's Attorney for nearly 17 years.

Today I am here to voice my support for HB 1596.

The Court system in North Dakota is extremely busy, handling thousands of cases each year. Currently, cases involving small amounts of marijuana and paraphernalia used to prepare and ingest it take time from dockets that are also handling serious violent crimes. They take time from prosecution offices that do not have infinite resources. They take time from law enforcement officers who must investigate these cases, testify in hearings and trials, and serve warrants for failure to appear on marijuana and paraphernalia charges. Marijuana offenders also take up jail space if they must spend time in custody. In contrast, making these offenses functionally equivalent to traffic tickets and giving offenders the option to pay fines in lieu of appearing in court cuts down on criminal justice system resources significantly. This bill promotes judicial efficiency and economy, allowing the criminal justice system to focus on more serious crimes and behaviors that impact the safety of our communities while still holding people accountable for possessing small amounts of marijuana and marijuana paraphernalia.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kimberlee J Hegvik
Cass County State's Attorney