

April 7, 2025
Senate Judiciary Committee
HB 1596
Senator Diane Larson, Chair

For the record, I am Stephanie Dassinger Engebretson. I am appearing on behalf of the Chiefs of Police Association of North Dakota. I am also the deputy director and attorney for the North Dakota League of Cities.

The Chiefs of Police appear in opposition to HB 1596. The bill turns the penalty from a criminal infraction to a non-criminal \$150 fee for possession of less than one-half ounce of marijuana or Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) if the individual is over eighteen years old. First, this appears to be a move towards legalization of marijuana which the voters defeated in November.

Second, for individuals who are 19 or 20, under this bill, for possession of a small amount of marijuana, it would be a non-criminal \$150 fine. Whereas, if that same 19 or 20 year is cited for possession of alcohol, he or she would be subject to a criminal infraction with up to a \$1,000 fine. This bill, as written, creates disparity between how alcohol and marijuana possession is treated for young adults.

The Chiefs of Police respectfully request a Do Not Pass recommendation on HB 1596 because it goes against the will of the voters by taking a step towards legalizing possession of marijuana and it creates an odd situation for possession of marijuana and alcohol for young adults.