

My name is Wyatt Smith and I am providing testimony as a private citizen. I have worked as a Sheriff's Deputy for 5 years in North Dakota. 1596 is a common-sense change to benefit our law enforcement resources and keep our communities safer in turn by increasing police presence.

This may come across as marijuana "decriminalization" but we already have had that since 2019 when possession of less than 1/2 OZ and paraphernalia became an infraction (fine with no possible jail time). Infractions require the court to determine the fine. Most fines are already around \$150 when people plead guilty and almost nobody fights marijuana infractions. This bill will simply allow law enforcement to issue the \$150 fine themselves on the side of the road.

This will save many officers 1-2 hours of paperwork for each offense since they will no longer have to pull a full case report to prepare for the court every time they charge it out. This may also very well increase enforcement since there will not be as much fatigue and burnout from officers if they simply can write a citation for the violation as opposed to racking up hours of paperwork currently for a small fine.

If someone is only charged with a marijuana infraction right now, as is, the contact always ends with the violator walking or driving away, no different than when you receive a speeding ticket. However, your citation has a mandatory court date on it and a great deal of paperwork is required from the officer. I believe it makes sense that if the violator carries about their day, the police should be able to mirror that. If someone does not go to jail, the police should not be taken off the street.

Essentially, the marijuana punishment will not change. The only thing changing is the procedure, in a positive direction.

We should keep our police officers on the street to provide presence to deter much bigger issues like shoplifting and aggressive driving. They should also be free to recognize people with warrants, interdict deadly drugs like fentanyl, and be close by to respond faster to emergencies.

Thank you for your consideration.