

OLMSTED COUNTY

SHERIFF



Date: 13 April 2023

To: Smart Approaches to Marijuana Minnesota

From: Sheriff Kevin E. Torgerson

Re: HF100/SF73 - Recreational Marijuana Legalization bill

I am Sheriff Kevin Torgerson of Olmsted County and the Minnesota Sheriff's Association.

I will highlight three concerns law enforcement remains to have regarding the marijuana bills today. At the core of our concerns is everything this committee represents.

Public Safety, Finance and Policy

First the bills authorize training more Drug Recognition Experts. This training is not easy to pull off and one not all agencies or any officer can just jump in and become. Also, the forced retirement and replacement of current drug detection dogs. For my agency alone that will cost forty thousand dollars for two K9 teams. This is not cheap, nor a standard Minnesotans can accept without trained teams.

The bills also authorize an Oral Fluid Preliminary testing pilot project between August this year until July 2025. However, the bill indicates effective dates for July and August this year or January 2024. How can we keep the public safe when legalized marijuana is available a year and a half before we have authorized testing procedures? Isn't that like buying a new car without safety features?

There is no way public safety can be ready by August 1st or January 1st.

Lastly, for nearly 20 years, the number of fatalities on our roads has been reduced nearly in half mostly to the credit of a program called TZD (Toward Zero Deaths). When other states legalized marijuana the number of traffic fatalities **HAS INCREASED** where one or more drivers are marijuana impaired. I'm saddened that the increased loss of life on our roads is simply viewed as collateral damage for those who wish to put a foreign substance in their body.

Please listen to your traffic safety experts and work with us to keep Minnesota safe.

Thank you.