

Senator Port Response to Misinformation from House Republicans On Upcoming Implementation of Adult-Use Cannabis

Prohibition of cannabis has failed to keep cannabis out of the hands of young people, ensure a well-regulated product, or make our communities safer. The legalization of adult-use cannabis was the culmination of decades of thoughtful work by advocates, experts, and legislators. With over 60 hours of committee input including dozens of GOP amendments, this bill allows adults to responsibly use cannabis, invests in community resources through local tax revenue, and begins to unwind the racist and damaging results of criminalization. To insinuate that this legislation in any way supports, promotes, or encourages the use of cannabis by children is as reckless as it is foolish, and is simply wrong: beginning on August 1, possession of adult-use cannabis will be legal for Minnesotans 21 and older.

Criminalizing and incarcerating young people for cannabis possession is neither a deterrent nor a path that helps teens to avoid graver consequences later in life. Every state that has legalized adult-use cannabis has seen an increase in the age of first use of cannabis and a decrease in the frequency of use by teens as cited in the Cannabis Legalization and Public Health Outcomes study of 2022.¹ Minnesotans asked for action, and the DFL trifecta responded by ending the policy of criminalizing cannabis possession and implementing methods that work to decrease use, like millions of dollars in youth peer-to-peer education, public service information about driving while intoxicated, and unprecedented investments in prevention, treatment and recovery resources. Additionally, with the passage of HF 100, the penalty for possession by an individual under 21 is a petty misdemeanor, despite Republican misinformation that there is no possible legal consequence.

While decriminalizing many aspects of cannabis use, some of the **strictest legal penalties** in the bill exist for those who sell to minors. Criminalizing young adults for possession maintains a cycle of harm, while aggressively going after those who illegally sell potentially unsafe products, especially to minors, provides the strongest path to eliminating the illicit market. A legal market, with age verification, testing, labeling, and education requirements is the best path forward for Minnesotans, and that's exactly what HF 100 does. DFL legislators listened to Minnesotans and we stand by our work to deliver for you this year.

A call for a special session on this issue is outrageous and is simply an attempt to use fearmongering and misinformation to stall the implementation of this bill. I encourage residents of Minnesota to follow along at <https://cannabis.mn.gov/> for accurate and useful information.

¹<https://www.cannabispublicpolicyconsulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Cannabis-Legalization-Public-Health-Outcomes-Fall-2022.pdf>