

Written Testimony in Support of SB 1548, Safer Marijuana Act

Chair and Members of the House Committee on Economic Development, Small Business, and Trade,

We are a group of Pediatric Hospitalists practicing in Portland, Oregon. In our roles caring for hospitalized children, we care for patients from across the state. We write in strong support of SB 1548, the Safer Marijuana Act, and urge the committee to vote “Yes.”

In our work, we regularly care for infants, toddlers, school aged children, and adolescents who experience serious health effects related to THC products, especially higher dose edibles. We want to share what we are seeing at the bedside and why SB 1548A is an important, evidence informed step to reduce harm to Oregon’s children and teens.

Preventing severe accidental ingestions in young children

We have cared for multiple young children who accidentally ingested THC edibles and then arrived profoundly altered, acting very strange, excessively sleepy, or difficult to arouse. In the most severe cases, children have been found to be not breathing or to have significant difficulty breathing, requiring urgent evaluation and close monitoring in the hospital.

These cases are frightening for families and can require substantial medical resources. Depending on severity, care may include close respiratory monitoring and supportive care, IV fluids for dehydration or poor intake, and extended observation until cognition returns to baseline.

SB 1548A’s provisions to limit a unit of a THC edible to a single serving size of THC, and to require individual wrapping of each edible, are practical safety measures that can reduce the likelihood that a toddler will consume multiple servings in one sitting, reducing both risk and severity of accidental ingestions.

Reducing harms from higher dose THC exposure in adolescents

We are also concerned about what we are seeing in adolescents. We have cared for multiple teens admitted with psychotic symptoms and severe behavioral or cognitive changes in the setting of frequent use of higher dose/high potency THC products, including edibles. In our clinical experience, these severe presentations appear to have increased as higher dose products have become more widely available.

The medical literature reinforces our concern that higher THC exposure is not benign for adolescents. A study published in JAMA Psychiatry (September 2020) found that daily use of high potency cannabis (>10% THC) was associated with 3.2 times greater odds of developing a psychotic disorder compared with never users, and high potency cannabis use alone increased odds by 1.6 times. While SB 1548A does not address every form of cannabis potency, it directly targets one important pathway to high dose exposure: edibles. By limiting THC to a single serving per individual edible and requiring each piece to be

individually wrapped, SB 1548A helps reduce the likelihood that a teen (or younger child) will inadvertently consume multiple servings at once and supports safer storage and dispensing in the home.

Why SB 1548A matters

SB 1548A is a targeted, child safety forward response to harms we are seeing with increasing frequency in our hospitals. Based on our clinical experience caring for Oregon’s children and the best available evidence, we strongly support SB 1548A and respectfully ask you to vote “Yes.”

Thank you for your time and your commitment to the health and safety of Oregon’s kids.

Sincerely,

Portland area Pediatric Hospitalists

Pediatric hospital physicians providing inpatient and referral level pediatric care for children from throughout Oregon

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