

Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

Senate Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioral Health

I strongly support SB 1548. As a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner at the Oregon State Hospital, I work with people every day who experience major mental illness including schizophrenia spectrum disorders and bipolar disorders. In psychiatry, we use the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (currently version 5-TR), to diagnose psychiatric illness. Schizophrenia spectrum disorders' criteria includes hallucinations, delusions, disorganization of thought, speech, and behavior, catatonia, and diminished emotional expression (also known as negative symptoms). Although it is not one of the criteria for schizophrenia, people with active psychosis may perpetrate violence toward others.

Many years ago, the percentage of THC was around 4%. Today, THC content can be up to 20%. There is ample scientific, peer-reviewed evidence which shows the impact of high potency cannabis use may contribute to permanent psychosis. When talking with people about the use of cannabis, they are often surprised to learn that cannabis is the number one substance which can lead to permanent psychosis (Fiorentini et al., 2021; Karimi, I., & Pooyanmehr). To provide perspective, methamphetamine can also contribute to psychosis but is much less likely to contribute to permanent psychosis, meaning once the substance is out of their system, they return to a non-psychotic state.

Risks factors for developing permanent cannabis induced psychosis include being born male, starting use at younger ages, longer duration and frequency of use, use of high potency (greater than 10% THC), and genetic predisposition (D'Souza et al., 2022; Fiorentini et al., 2021; Ksir & Hart, 2016; Vukadinovic, Herman, & Rosenzweig, 2013; Widing et al, 2022). People with cannabis induced psychosis have a significantly greater rate of hospitalization related to mental illness. For those with schizophrenia, cannabis is more likely to contribute to a relapse of symptoms even if they are taking antipsychotic medications (Levi et al, 2023).

The economic burden of schizophrenia spectrum disorders in the United States in 2019 was \$342.2 billion (Kadakia, et. al, 2022). Between 2013 and 2019, the economic burden doubled. In addition to economic cost, the emotional cost of being a loved one of a person with schizophrenia is excruciating. Chronic stress, anxiety, and depression are common. People with schizophrenia have the potential to commit serious crimes. Frequently, they

are victimized due to their mental illness. They are three and a half more times likely to commit suicide than the general population and are more likely to become homeless which often leads to using further illicit substances in order to manage their symptoms.

I urge you to consider support SB 1548 which is in the best interest for the mental health of Oregonians. This senate bill is important because it would establish reasonable limits for the content of THC in edible cannabis products, require clear labeling which states cannabis can contribute to psychosis, and bring awareness to the public about the health considerations related to cannabis use. If you would like to come observe me at the Oregon State Hospital in order to understand the experience of Oregonians who suffer from psychotic illnesses, I would be pleased to have you join me in the future. Please don't hesitate to contact me for further information.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

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