Written Testimony of
Kurt Westby, Commissioner
Department of Labor
Judiciary Committee
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Good Morning Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Senator Kissel, Representative Rebimbas and members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with written testimony regarding Senate Bill 16 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ADULT USE OF CANNABIS. My name is Kurt Westby and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Labor.

Senate Bill 16 (SB 16) offers a comprehensive approach to the legalization of cannabis for adults outside of the workplace. Although it is the intention of this bill to have the employee protections in Section 46 enforced exclusively through a private right of action, I note that existing law currently charges the Labor Department with regulation of drug testing in the workplace. This bill does not change existing drug testing law with respect to an employer’s ability to request or require drug testing from existing or prospective employees. An employer may conduct drug testing if it has a legal basis to do so, like the following: (1) pre-employment testing per § 31-51v; (2) random testing per § 31-51x(b); and (3) reasonable suspicion per § 31-51x(a). An employer still can conduct any of the previous tests, but the employer may not refuse to hire a prospective employee or take an adverse action against an existing employee if a drug “screening test” [Section 46] is positive for cannabis. The employer cannot make passing such tests a condition of employment.

I further note that this bill is entirely consistent with the Palliative Use of Marijuana Act ("PUMA"), and safeguards the rights of employees, prospective employees and employers in the workplace. As with the PUMA legislation, no employer is permitted to take an adverse action against a prospective employee or an employee on account of his or her status as a user of cannabis during off-duty hours. It is important to note that all employers retain the right at all times to prohibit the use of intoxicating substances, including cannabis, and to discipline any employee whose use of cannabis renders the employee to be under the influence at the workplace. The reasonable concerns of employers to a workplace free from intoxicating substances of any kind have been taken into consideration in SB 16 and balanced with employees’ rights to legitimate off-duty use.

The Department, alongside the Administration, stands ready to engage with the committee to ensure that Sections 45 and 46 strike the right balance.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.
Benefits of Cannabis from a scientific perspective:

Geraniol (a terpene/aroma molecule found in cannabis) - Papers by Dr. Dunlop and Dr. Peralta-Yahya demonstrate the efficacy of Geraniol and Geranyl-Acetate as biofuels (with Geraniol being able to supplement and/or replace Ethanol and Geranyl-Acetate being able to supplement and/or replace biodiesel due to having a lower freezing temperature).

Dr. Müller produced a study on the efficacy of Geraniol for mosquito control.

Dr. Carnesecchi used a mouse model to study the synergy of Geraniol with 5-fluorouracil (an anti cancer drug). With Geraniol less 5-fluorouracil is required to reduce tumor size.

The pubchem page on Geraniol discusses a study in which Geraniol acts against Ouabain induced heart arrhythmia.

Over the last few years there has been a push to have a biotechnology pipeline in this state, this will be a positive next step for this endeavor

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify and give my perspective.

-Adam Julian