Vermont House Government Operations Committee Testimony regarding H. 612 - An act relating to miscellaneous cannabis amendments
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- My name is Charles MacLean. I am a primary care physician and Professor of Medicine at the Larner College of Medicine at UVM. I am here today representing the Vermont Academic Detailing Program. This program is housed in the Office of Primary Care at Larner. Our team has been delivering evidence-based education to health care clinicians in Vermont since 1999. The Academic Detailing educational model is based on forming long term trusted relationships between clinicians and the academic detailers on our team, and is used in variety of states around the country, and by the Veterans Administration. Our academic detailing team consists of physicians and pharmacists and our target audience is primary care prescribers in Vermont.

- We develop a new topic each year focused on common issues encountered in primary care, particularly where there are new medications on the market or new developments that prescribers may not be familiar with. Recent topics include Obesity Management, Novel Medications for Type 2 Diabetes, and Treatment of Alcohol Use Disorder.

- Many physicians are not familiar with cannabis, either THC or CBD. In 2021, with the changing legal landscape making cannabis more available to Vermonters and data showing that Vermonters' use of cannabis products was higher than the national average, we developed an AD session regarding Cannabinoids. We performed a thorough review of the scientific studies regarding the benefits, the side effects, and the risks of Cannabinoids. We used the same thorough and rigorous process for grading this evidence that we apply to any other topic.

- The Academic Detailing program was specifically named to participate in the Act 65 Medical Cannabis Registry Study, and I was the representative who participated in the four Study Group meetings.

- Cannabis products available for the medical or adult use market are different from medications that are FDA approved. The FDA approval process requires that medications be tested in clinical trials and demonstrate that they are effective for treating the target condition, and that the side effects or adverse effects are acceptable. There are some CBD and synthetic THC products that are FDA approved to treat a very specific conditions, such as a type of childhood epilepsy, and nausea and vomiting associated with chemotherapy. These products have gone through the FDA approval process.

- There are no FDA approved products that use whole plant cannabis, inhaled cannabis, or high dose THC.
- Three of the key messages we discussed with health care providers in our Academic Detailing sessions regarding Cannabis were:

– many of their patients are using cannabis products, so it is important for them to be aware of the potential risks and potential benefits

– cannabis use disorder is a real condition that shares features of other substance use disorders. We should all be aware of it and screen for it as we screen for other substance use disorders.

– THC consumption has an impairing effect on driving; we should be educating THC users of this risk.

– There are many clinical studies that have explored the effects of THC and CBD on a wide range of conditions, from anxiety to insomnia to chronic pain, HOWEVER, the available studies have limitations based on factors such as the study design, bias, sample size, and duration.

- I would like to address two issues from the Proposed Act 65 Recommendations today. The first is the recommendation regarding how new conditions are added to the current list of qualifying conditions. I support the <u>creation of a non-legislative entity to recommend or approve new qualifying conditions</u>. I believe this entity should include an expert in evidence-based review of scientific studies. This could be a clinician or a basic scientist or a statistician. This would assure that this non-legislative entity would be able to clearly interpret the findings from scientific studies and provide evidence-based recommendations. I also pointed out during the Study Group meetings that the inclusion of an expert in cannabis research would also be very helpful to this entity.

- Secondly, I would like to address the recommendation to develop a cannabis education curriculum for health care professionals. <u>The Vermont Academic Detailing Program may be available to develop and deliver this educational activity</u>, depending on funding and staffing.