Testimony on H.612
Tom Fontana
In favor of keeping current THC potency caps

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Science and experience have led me to support the current caps on THC potency caps.

My name is Tom Fontana. I am a licensed mental heath counselor and licensed drug and alcohol counselor. I work at the University of Vermont where I provide drug and alcohol prevention, education and interventions. I meet with hundreds of students each year in one-on-one conversation and small group settings.

The science is clear: lower potency means lower risk. That's a basic principle of public health and harm reduction. Additionally, specific to THC potency, there is plenty of research about the harms associated with high potency cannabis. (A good summary of the data can be found in Fischer 2022, page 7.)

In addition to the science, it is my experience talking with people about their cannabis use that leads me to supporting THC potency caps. Yes, there are acute negative experiences that come from too much THC. But more often than a single negative experience, it is the long term effects that people often report as adding to their experience of harms. Greater potency leads more quickly to an increased tolerance. And tolerance drives many of the challenges: people need an increased amount to get the same effect, and that increased amount exacerbates the harms. Tolerance also diminishes the positive effects.

Our current THC caps in regards to flower are a bit of a joke. Nature caps potency at a theoretical 33 to 35% . But in practice, it is hard to grow anything beyond 30% anyway. We are not restricting anything beyond what natural already dictates. Nonetheless, I think there are secondary benefits to keeping a THC caps on flower (such as, prohibiting additives.) But the caps on concentrates are effectual and beneficial. It will help people have few acute negative reactions. And THC caps will continue to benefit people long term by helping them keep their exposure closer to safer levels.