

Written Testimony regarding S. 278 February 18 2026

Glauke Cooijmans, Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union (SVSU)

Introduction

Thank you for hearing my testimony.

My name is Glauke Cooijmans. I work as prevention coordinator at the middle and high school of the Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union (SVSU) in Bennington. I have a professional background in "*Mental Health*" and "*Health Education & Health Promotion*". Part of my role is teaching substance misuse prevention lessons to students; co-facilitating peer prevention groups; providing substance use related early intervention services and sharing substance misuse prevention information and resources with students, staff and community.

Position Statement

I have concerns about proposals to increase the potency limits and the purchase limits from 1 ounce to 2 ounces as proposed in Bill S. 278. These proposals to lower the restrictions will promote normalization of the use of cannabis in Vermont. This increases the risks around cannabis use due to more of it in the community, including even higher THC potency products. Meanwhile while 21+ use is legal in Vermont, the risks that cannabis use poses on youth are significant and not enough understood.

My concerns relate to cannabis risks I encounter in my role.

I will provide the written testimony and links to related documents after this meeting.

First: Underage Cannabis Use

Even though the legal age to use cannabis is 21, in my work I hear a significant amount of youth use well below this age. Data from the 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) shows that 35% of Vermont high school students and 8% of Vermont middle school students have **EVER** tried using cannabis/ marijuana products.

Meanwhile 22% of high school students **currently** use cannabis, which is measured by past 30 day use. This number is 4% for Vermont middle school students.

Ever tried marijuana/ cannabis %

HS VT	HS SVSU	MS VT	MS SVSU
35	41	8	14

Currently used marijuana/ cannabis (past 30 days) %

HS VT	HS SVSU	MS VT	MS SVSU
22	23	4	8

The YRBS shows also in more detail at what age one tried cannabis for the first time. 6 % of Vermont high school students say they **first tried** cannabis before the age of 13 years old, while 2% of Vermont middle school students say they **first tried** it before the age of 11 years old.

Tried marijuana/ cannabis for the first time %

Before age of 13

Before age of 11

HS VT	HS SVSU	MS VT	MS SVSU
6	10	2	5

The above data is illustrated by the fact that I personally have heard students say they used cannabis before 6th grade, for example edibles.

Meanwhile, elementary school staff has reached out to me for guidance and resources in the aftermath of youth being under the influence of cannabis at school.

Note: In our district most of the numbers are even higher.

https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/document/hsi_yrbs_2023_southwest_vermont_su.pdf

Impact on youth

I have heard students say they were at the ER due to symptoms related to cannabis use. They described feelings as “not being able to respond to others”; “black -out”; “feeling very scared”; “paranoid”; “feeling very sick”; “out of the body experience”; “thinking they were going to die” etc. I have heard about using a dab pen (Dabbing), a method of use which uses highly concentrated THC wax (60-90%). I have also heard of using a dab pen to “hit a blinker”. I had to research this myself: It means inhaling from a dab pen until the safety timer shuts off, delivering a fast, very high potency hit. It is promoted through social media TikTok “Challenges”.

In my written testimony I will share a Stanford Medicine REACH Lab infographic illustrating the risks of Dabbing, which like many (especially high potency) THC products, includes increased risk of addiction, anxiety, depression and schizophrenia, lung and heart disease. It is also known to impact memory and can cause learning problems.

[Hitting a Blinker](#)

[High-School-Dabbing-Infographic-11x17.pdf](#)

<https://prevented.org/teen-cannabis-use-and-school/>

Second:

Lack of awareness among adults regarding risks associated with cannabis

Based on what I hear from students regarding cannabis use in general I conclude that cannabis is commonly used in households which is supported by published research. However there seems to be a lack of awareness among adults regarding the concerns around it.

<https://datatools.samhsa.gov/saes/state>

A. Driving under the influence of Cannabis

The above is illustrated by the following data regarding students having been in a car with the driver being under influence of cannabis, which poses serious risks. 22 % of Vermont high school students say they have **ever** ridden in a car with a driver who was under the influence of cannabis. This number is 13% for middle school students. The numbers for our district (SVSU) are higher.

Ever rode with a driver who had been using marijuana / cannabis %

HS VT	HS SVSU	MS VT	MS SVSU
22	27	13	19

B. Accidental ingestion of cannabis

Data shows that accidental ingestion of cannabis products by minors, especially edibles, which often look like regular gummies, brownies or cookies, has increased. Based on the following data it seems that adults do not necessarily take the proper steps to keep cannabis, which includes high potency THC products, away from youth. Cannabis-related poison control center calls among Vermonters between 0 and 19 years old increased from 2 calls in 2012 to 26 in 2021. In 2021 6 to 12 year olds surpassed the other age groups with the highest number of cannabis-related poison center calls. This was before cannabis was available in the retail setting in Vermont.

<https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/document/DSU-CannabisDataReport2023.pdf>

During my substance misuse prevention lessons at the middle school students share that they do know situations regarding accidental ingestion of cannabis.

More recent data from America's Poison Centers illustrate the increase in pediatric edibles cannabis poisoning cases in the past year from 666 to 929 nationwide.

<https://www.poisonhelp.org/pediatric-edible-cannabis-poisoning/>

In my written testimony I am also including links to a scientific article and a New York Times article describing in more detail the impact of accidental ingestion of THC products on young children.

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11934634/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/10/health/cannabis-poisoning-children.html>

C: Cannabis Hyperemesis Syndrome

Southwest Vermont Medical Center (SVMC) reached out to alert a rise in cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome cases (CHS) in their ER department. This is a syndrome caused by long term cannabis use. They asked to help share information about CHS with students and the community.

I have heard students say they know people with CHS symptoms due to cannabis use. One of the speakers today will share more about CHS.

The concerns around the risks of youth cannabis use and underawareness in the community regarding the “downsides” of cannabis prompted us to co-host three “community conversations” around cannabis in October 2025. One for middle school students; one for high school students and one for families and the broader Bennington community. The keynote speaker on these events was Tom Fontana, Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor (LCMHC) and Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor (LADC) from the University of Vermont.

Conclusion

I believe that increasing the potency limits and increasing the purchase limits from 1 ounce to 2 ounces as proposed in Bill S. 278 will promote normalization of the use of cannabis in Vermont. This increases the risks around cannabis use due to more of it in the community, including even higher THC potency products.

Meanwhile while 21+ use is legal in Vermont, the risks that cannabis use poses on youth are significant and I hope this statement did shine some more light on this important issue.