



Before the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee
Written Proponent Testimony on Senate Bill 57
April 30, 2019

Chairman Koehler, Vice Chair Smith, Ranking Member Brent, and members of the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee, my name is Zachary Frymier and I am the Director of Energy and Environmental Policy for the Ohio Chamber of Commerce. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to offer proponent testimony in support of Senate Bill 57 (SB 57).

The Ohio Chamber is the state's leading business advocate and we represent nearly 8,000 companies that do business in Ohio. Our mission is to aggressively champion free enterprise, economic competitiveness and growth for the benefit of all Ohioans.

We are pleased to support Ohio's potential hemp industry. The latest farm bill enacted by Congress removed hemp from listing under the Controlled Substances Act and allows states to regulate hemp through their departments of agriculture. If Ohio fails to enact a regulatory program the U.S. Department of Agriculture will create a program for the state.

SB 57 creates this framework in Ohio by decriminalizing hemp for state law purposes and establishing the hemp cultivation licensing program within the Ohio Department of Agriculture. Consistent with federal law, entities looking to cultivate hemp will be required to undergo a license process that may include a background check. The bill will also enhance our knowledge of hemp by allowing our universities, the Department of Agriculture, and private industry to conduct much-needed research on the plant's ability improve water quality and act as a herbicide.

Historically hemp was grown in Ohio for rope and other similar materials. Today, hemp can be used for clothing, paper, carpeting, construction materials, auto parts, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, food products and other purposes. Unfortunately, prohibition at the state and federal level has required importation of these products into our market, mainly from China.

SB 57 would again allow hemp cultivation in Ohio, bringing economic growth, jobs, and increased prosperity. The Ohio Chamber of Commerce urges your support.