



SENATE BILL 57 - INDUSTRIAL HEMP

WRITTEN PROPONENT TESTIMONY

OHIO HOUSE AGRICULTURE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

APRIL 30, 2019

Chairman Koehler, Vice-chair Smith, Ranking-Member Brent and members of the Ohio House Agriculture & Rural Development Committee, I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the nearly 22,000 governing members of NFIB to lend our support for Senate Bill 57, legislation that will update Ohio law to decriminalize hemp and hemp products.

By way of background, a typical NFIB member employs 20 or fewer and has less than \$2 million in annual sales. Our members come from all industries, and we look like any Main Street in your legislative districts. We have many members in the agriculture, manufacturing, and retail industries, all of whom will benefit from Senate Bill 57.

The 2018 U.S. Farm Bill removed hemp from the Controlled Substances Act, rendering it an agricultural commodity like corn or wheat. The federal bill left to the states how to regulate hemp. Over 40 states have elected to follow federal law and provide its citizens the opportunity to develop products utilizing hemp. We believe it is time for Ohio to follow suit and reclassify hemp and hemp derived products. As the sponsors of the bill indicated, hemp as defined in SB 57, is not marijuana. The levels of the chemical producing a high from marijuana allowed under the bill are so low; it would not allow any individual to recognize a high.

When SB 57 becomes law, Ohio farmers will be able to legally plant another cash crop that can enhance their operations and allow them to sell what so many of their colleagues in other states already do. The bill establishes a regulatory framework to monitor and

regulate hemp cultivation. License holders will also be subjected to background checks to protect the public further. Importantly, SB 57 does not restrict the possession or production of hemp. We urge this committee not to seek further regulatory restrictions that may hinder the growing and/or production of hemp. Ohio remains a manufacturing powerhouse and preserving the ability to take hemp and produce a bevy of products free from onerous regulatory restrictions will ensure we can become a national leader in this market.

There is a growing demand for hemp products, particularly those containing cannabidiol (CBD) oil. Last year, the Ohio Board of Pharmacy required products that contain CBD to be sold through the Medical Marijuana Control Program. Unfortunately, some small businesses were unintentionally breaking Ohio law by selling a product that is legal in so many other states. Senate Bill 57 will correct this wrong.

We urge this committee for an expeditious, favorable recommendation of Senate Bill 57. Senate Bill 57 unanimously passed the Ohio Senate. Ohio is doing a disservice to multiple industries by not decriminalizing hemp and hemp products. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. I may be reached via email at chris.ferruso@nfib.org or via phone at 614-221-4107.

Sincerely,



Christopher J. Ferruso
Legislative Director
NFIB