



Senate Bill 57
Kristin Mullins, President/CEO
Ohio Grocers Association – March 13, 2019

Chairman Hoagland, Vice Chair Hill, Ranking Member O'Brien and Members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of Senate Bill 57.

As President of the Ohio Grocers Association, I proudly represent over 400 food retail, wholesale and supply companies across the Buckeye state. My members range from the largest chain stores to the smallest "mom and pop" independent grocers as well as some convenience stores and of course the food wholesalers who supply these stores.

My members sell a variety of consumer goods and products at their stores and are always looking to diversify their portfolio with new and innovative opportunities. Those include your run of the mill food items but also new and emerging products like hemp products including hemp-derived cannabidiol (CBD). The 2018 Farm Bill permanently removed hemp from the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) making hemp an agricultural commodity and redefining hemp products like CBD so that they are not under the purview of the CSA.

In lieu of this and because Ohio law does provide exceptions for the sale of products that are excluded from federal drug control laws like hemp-derived CBD, many of members sold these hemp products at their retail locations. However, in August of 2018, the Ohio Board of Pharmacy issued a policy FAQ that states that CBD products, whether derived from hemp or marijuana, can only be distributed through Ohio's medical marijuana dispensaries because hemp is included in the definition of marijuana under Ohio law. This has led to enforcement concerns and confusion among retailers and in select cases, thousands of dollars' worth of hemp products being embargoed by the State.

It is imperative we act now to clarify the Ohio Revised Code to bring Ohio law up to date with our neighboring states where hemp-derived products are sold legally every day so that Ohio retailers can compete and utilize this emerging market.

We commend the leadership of Senator Hill and Senator Huffman for their sponsorship of this important legislation and urge your favorable consideration of Senate Bill 57.

