

Testimony Appeal of how Ohio currently plans to disperse licenses and accept applications for adult use marijuana licenses to businesses.

My name is Thomas Broderick and I am the owner of Relief Buddies hemp dispensary and Relief Buddies branded hemp products.

Currently how licenses will be issued is planned as medical marijuana dispensaries will get the first round of licenses and then up to 50 licenses to social equity program applicants. Social Equity program consists of minority owned businesses, women owned businesses and persons with a marijuana possession charge and/or conviction. I am all for equal opportunity but people who broke the law should not get priority over those who have followed the law especially those who already have ran a successful hemp dispensary and brand for 5 years. I began Relief Buddies in August of 2018 after I experienced the biggest heartbreak and mental health depression and anxiety of my adult life. I had not used any kind of cannabis in 7 years. A friend recommended CBD to me and as someone who takes health and wellness very seriously, I began to research night and day for nearly 2 weeks before trying it for the first time. During my research I learned that quality was the most important and that a lot of CBD and hemp products were not 3<sup>rd</sup> party tested by certified labs and without that it may not be safe or effective. I tried a full spectrum CBD vape first from a brand I had researched that fortunately I was able to find at a local upkept smoke shop. This was surprising because smoke shops now are notorious for selling very questionable hemp. That full spectrum CBD vape was from a native Cincinnati Ohio company also. That company was Queen City Hemp. That vape did amazing things for my anxiety. I was able to quiet the racing thoughts which then helped me with my depression a bit also. I then ordered some full spectrum CBD oil from a Colorado based company online and found this helped me sleep a bit more. I found it fascinating how helpful this was and that all those years in high school having research papers and debates on the legalization of marijuana that it has a lot of potential for medical uses. I now had the opportunity to experience the medical use of cannabis. Then I ordered some CBD flower from Oregon online. Once again, I was blown away the benefits of this plant. At that point I knew that I wanted to help people find relief from their anxiety, depression and physical pains. I continued to study the benefits and research of CBD and THC along with CBG, CBN and other cannabinoids from this amazing plant while also learning what it took to start a hemp business. I taught myself what it took to run a successful hemp business and all I know about cannabis. I utilized my professional and educational experience in management and leadership. I took \$500 from a paycheck which equated to about half of my bi-weekly paycheck to buy a wholesale amount of CBD flower. I registered my business and then found someone to build a website for me from another paycheck. October 2018, I launched my website and had my first sale in November. I went through the tough times with credit card processing in this industry, still worked full time and knew this would pay off but I just didn't have the money to put forth to really kick this business off. A good month was \$500. I had no investment just a website and social media presence. I lost my full-time job in late 2019 and then my wife lost her job in January 2020 right before the pandemic. I had really focused on doing what I could to make a social media presence to organically get this business off to making a living for my family. Covid pandemic hit and the whole world was in fear and businesses were shutting down. My wife and I were on unemployment so when the stimulus checks, and unemployment boosts hit our account we paid off some debt and then saved some. While others were spending that money on shopping

sprees we decided to save and invest it. Cannabis was an essential business so I kept hoping that I would find a place to open a store. I was told by multiple people even business experts that online was the way to go not stores because you can buy all this online. I knew that what would make Relief Buddies such a benefit to communities is that our team would be knowledgeable of the products we sell and then benefits of cannabis and hemp. I would train them on all I learned. I have done just that and that is what Relief Buddies is known for is how we know everything about the products we sell and all information about how these cannabinoids interact with the body and give recommendations based on the customer's needs. I had saved enough that in August 2020 I found a small location two streets down from my house in Lindenwald of Hamilton Ohio. The first Relief Buddies hemp dispensary was opened October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020. I ran it myself until January 2021 and began my own brand of gummies and vape products manufactured by trusted and licensed labs when I also hired my first 2 team members. Midway through 2021 I opened my second store located in Emigsville, Pennsylvania where I began distributing and packaging the Relief Buddies branded products along with having the first dispensary lounge combined with a store in the area. Fast forward to now I have a small team a true small business team that manages and runs these stores while I handle the administrative and managerial things and working as closely to my customers as possible as a successful business owner. I am not yet rich by money standpoint, but I am rich in joy from how I am apart of helping so many people here in Ohio, in PA and anywhere we can legally ship our hemp to. We have over 4,000 customers registered in our system and that does not include those who have declined to register for an account. The customer reach of Relief Buddies has been a blessing to my family but most importantly communities in which we have storefronts. It would be a shame to halt the growth and reach we have experienced resulting in less people having access to quality cannabis and a team of people who not only know what they are selling and how to sell it so that customers are satisfied which they never get at smoke shops and rarely get at medical dispensaries all because the myself the owner chose to obey the law and not get a criminal marijuana charge and was not born a woman or of a minority. I want an opportunity just like anyone else. I have worked so hard and sacrificed so much for this day to come and it's here. It would be awful if I did all this to get denied for reasons out of my control or because I have a clean criminal record. Thank you for the opportunity to plead my case and provide testimony on this issue.

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