

Ohio Senate
Senate General Government Committee
Senate Bill 326

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Chair Wilkin, Vice Chair Schuring and Ranking Member DeMora, and members of the Senate General Government, thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony in support of Senate Bill 326, sponsored by Senator Steve Huffman (R- Tip City). This bill would prohibit anyone from selling an intoxicating hemp product in Ohio and would go a long way to protect our children from accidental ingestions.

My name is Kelly Blankenship and I am a board-certified pediatric psychiatrist. I serve as the Associate Chief Medical Officer for Behavioral Health at Dayton Children's Hospital. Dayton Children's cares for more than 320,000 children annually, from throughout 20 counties in West/Central Ohio.

At Dayton Children's, we are deeply concerned about the impact of easily accessible marijuana and hemp products on our children. Because edible marijuana products can look just like regular candies and snacks, they are incredibly dangerous for children. In fact, in a recent review of our data, from 2019 to 2023, emergency department visits for kids who accidentally consumed or were exposed to cannabis products went up by 571%.

This is an issue we are seeing across Ohio. The total number of incidents reported Ohio Poison Centers where children under 18 years old were exposed to some form of marijuana was 196 in 2018, which increased to 769 so far in 2024. The majority of those cases were with edible kinds of marijuana, which included 146 incidents in 2018 up to 698 so far in 2024, according to data from Ohio Poison Centers.

This bill focuses on removing intoxicating hemp products and this is an important step in protecting kids from these accidental ingestions. While our data does not specify the source of edibles, we do know that these products contain delta-8-THC, a federally unregulated 'sister compound' to the more widely known delta-9-THC. Delta-8-THC and it produces a similar high, however it has not been evaluated by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) for safe use, and these products often contain varying concentrations of delta-8-THC and we have no idea what other potentially harmful chemicals are included.

These products are especially risky for our children because they look just like every day treats. These products seem harmless because they look like the treats they have had before. Yet these products can actually contain several times the recommended adult dose of THC. Even if a child consumes a small amount, it can lead to serious symptoms, including dizziness, weakness, difficulty breathing, or heart issues.

I urge you to take action and pass SB 326 to protect our children from these dangerous, untested products. Thank you again for the opportunity to submit this written testimony in support of SB 326.

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