



Senator Shane Wilkin, Chair
General Government Committee
Senate Building
1 Capitol Square
Ground Floor, 050
Columbus, Ohio 43215

November 19, 2024

Re: S.B. No. 326 - Support

Dear Chair Wilkin:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of S.B. No. 326. This bill would prohibit the sale of intoxicating hemp products in the State of Ohio. We appreciate the collaboration of Senator Huffman through the Interested Parties stakeholder process. Our team has worked with Senator Huffman and his staff on this topic and looks forward to our continued work together. Verano also appreciates Governor DeWine's leadership on this issue and welcomes any opportunity to assist the Governor and his Administration.

Verano is a publicly traded multi-state cannabis operator with extensive experience safely serving marijuana consumers in partnership with state regulators. We have been operating in Ohio since the inception of the medical marijuana program and currently operate a cultivation and manufacturing facility in Canton as well as medical and adult-use dispensaries in Antwerp, Canton, Newark, Cincinnati, Bowling Green, and Dayton under the "Zen Leaf" moniker.

The 2018 federal Farm Bill created the loophole in which intoxicating hemp manufacturers are operating today. The 2018 Farm Bill removed legal barriers to industrial hemp production by removing hemp, defined as the plant *cannabis sativa* L. with a Delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) concentration of not more than .3% from the federal Controlled Substances Act¹. The 2018 Farm Bill loophole has led to the proliferation and sale of unregulated and untested intoxicating hemp products that pose a danger to the public, especially children. These products do not go through the level of scrutiny required of the legal marijuana market in Ohio, which require rigorous product

¹ Ohio State University, *Considerations for Regulating Intoxicating Hemp Products* (2024)

testing, product tracking, packaging, and exclusive sale in adult-only establishments. Short of regulating intoxicating hemp products at the same or more stringent levels of the regulated marijuana industry to ensure the public's health, it is vital that intoxicating hemp products be prohibited for sale.

Verano welcomes a dialogue to discuss how intoxicating hemp products can be regulated in Ohio. With a national perspective and experience serving Ohio consumers in a well-regulated system, Verano can offer a unique perspective to state policy makers. Thank you once again for the opportunity to offer feedback on S.B. No. 326. Should you have any questions, please contact Neal Karkhanis, Director, Legislative Policy at neal.karkhanis@verano.com.

Sincerely,

Neal Karkhanis