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Proponent Testimony, Ohio Senate Bill 326 (SB 326)
Ohio Senate General Government Committee
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Dear Chairman Wilkin, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member DeMora, and fellow members of the Senate General Government Committee –

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on Senate Bill 326 on behalf of Akron Children's Hospital, and we applaud the timing of this hearing. As you well know, the landscape of CBD-based products has changed dramatically in Ohio over the past year making discussion and analysis of hemp products more important than ever. We would also like to acknowledge the leadership of Governor DeWine and his cabinet on this issue as we greatly appreciate their consistency in calling out the dangers to Ohio's pediatric population from this new and unregulated market. Akron Children's Hospital is acutely aware of the dangers of these products, and we have increasingly seen their negative effects on our patient population.

Senate Bill 326 prohibits the sale of intoxicating hemp products in Ohio. These products are untested, unregulated, psychoactive products that can be more intoxicating and harmful to children than traditional marijuana products. Delta-8 THC is a psychoactive substance found in the cannabis sativa plant, of which marijuana and hemp are two varieties. Delta-8 THC is one of many cannabinoids produced naturally by the cannabis plant, however because it is not produced in a significant amount, Delta-8 THC is usually produced from concentrated amounts hemp-derived cannabidiol (CBD). These products are packaged and marketed as hemp, like CBD; however, they have been chemically altered or infused with synthetic and potentially harmful substances that cause an intensely psychoactive and intoxicating effect. It is important to recognize that these products have not been formally researched, evaluated or approved by the FDA.

The use of hemp intoxicants such as Delta-8 THC presents multiple risks to the health of individual Ohioans, particularly children. Currently, there is no age limit for buying Delta-8 THC products, which means children and teens are legally allowed to purchase them without parental approval in commercial establishments, such as gas stations, vape shops, grocery stores, farmers markets and coffee shops, as well as online.

Additionally, there are no advertising or packaging requirements for products that contain Delta-8. The result of this lack of oversight is that these products are marketed directly to children through packaging designed to mimic popular cereals or candy with flavors such as "Unicorn Berry" and "Girl Scout Cookie." Also, utilizing false health and wellness claims that products can provide benefits related to weight loss, mental focus and managing anxiety is common. In reality, these products can cause anxiety, psychosis, memory problems and even addiction.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue. We, as many other states have, should do everything we can to keep these harmful products out of the hands of children and teens and enact penalties on those who seek to harm our most vulnerable populations and in whose health we have been entrusted. SB 326 is a potentially life-saving bill, and we would greatly appreciate your support.