

Ohio Senate
General Government Committee
Ohio Poison Centers Testimony on SB 326

Chairman Wilkin, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member DeMora and members of the committee:

Thank you for allowing us to testify on the impact of intoxicating hemp products on Ohioans and our Poison Control Services. My name is Natalie Rine and I serve as the Managing Director of the Central Ohio Poison Center located at Nationwide Children's Hospital. I am joined by my colleague Dr. Hannah Hays, the Medical Director and Chief of Toxicology at the Central Ohio Poison Center and Nationwide Children's in Columbus. Together, we represent Ohio Poison Control services provided to all Ohioans at no cost 24 hours per day, 365 days per year.

Ohio Poison Control Centers (PCCs) provide immediate, trusted expert medical advice and drug information to individuals and families of all ages. Last year, we responded to more than 100,000 consultations, representing a poisoning or drug overdose every 6 minutes. One in five of these calls were received from emergency departments, first responders, or law enforcement professionals while responding to an overdose patient or poisoning victim.

Poison Control services are provided by highly skilled physicians, pharmacists, and nurses who receive specialized training and certification in medical toxicology and related disciplines such as addiction medicine. It is well established that consultation with a poison center improves patient outcomes and lowers healthcare costs by reducing unnecessary ED visits, ambulance runs, and hospital length of stay. It is estimated that we save Ohioans nearly \$60 million dollars each year, which is second only to vaccines in savings per dollar invested.

Every call to the poison center is documented and uploaded to the National Poison Data System (NPDS) in real time. This data is used to identify and respond to emerging public health threats as well as to advance medical research. This resource allows us to play a key role in emergency preparedness as demonstrated by the clinical guidance and situational awareness we provided during the East Palestine Train Derailment.

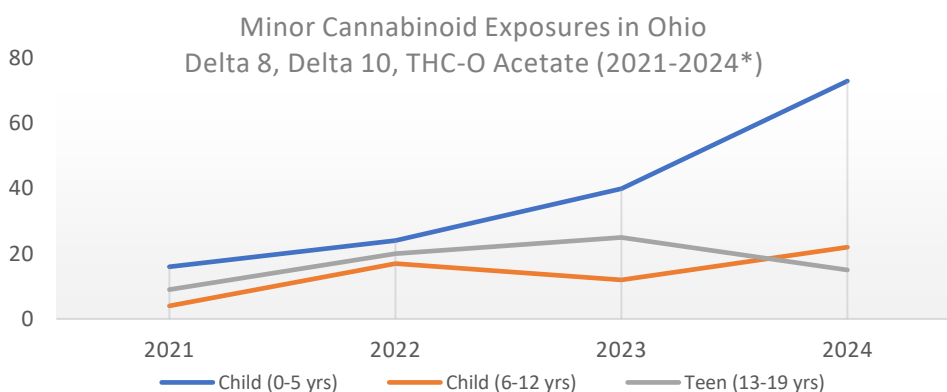
As our colleagues in surrounding states have learned, intoxicating hemp products, such as those containing delta-8 tetrahydrocannabinol, present several challenging public health issues, which Dr. Hays will discuss further.

The number of accidental poisonings reported to Ohio Poison Centers increased 280% since these products became wide spread and poison centers developed the capability to track exposures in 2021. In children under 6 years, exposures have increased over 350%. When children access these products, they can experience severe symptoms including hallucinations, confusion, loss of consciousness, and respiratory failure. We currently receive several calls each day for exposures to cannabinoids, including intoxicating hemp products, in children under 6 years. A quarter of children who consume intoxicating hemp products require admission to the hospital, and more than a third of those admitted require ICU level care.

According to a study we published that analyzed over 5,000 pediatric exposures to delta-8, delta-10, and THC-O-acetate reported to America's Poison Centers in 2021 and 2022, over 95% of exposures to

intoxicating hemp products in children under 6 years occur via ingestion of edible products. Because symptoms do not begin immediately after an edible ingestion, children have time to consume very large doses before anyone recognizes that something is wrong. When this happens, we often receive a call from EMS, requesting assistance in caring for a critically ill child while on scene and in transport.

It may surprise you that poison centers receive calls from law enforcement who are caring for someone with severe symptoms after an exposure to cannabis edibles. In my practice, I also receive phone calls almost weekly from child protective services and police officers who need my help understanding what happened, how to interpret laboratory testing, and how to support families with education and other prevention resources.



These accidental poisonings are negatively affecting children, families, and healthcare systems throughout Ohio and without this legislation, they may continue to increase. A recent study conducted by our group at Nationwide Children's Hospital found states transitioning from illegal to legal cannabis had significantly higher mean rates of delta-8-THC exposures than states not in transition. In this same study, the rate of delta-8-THC exposures was significantly lower in states where delta-8-THC was banned. In states where delta-8-THC was unregulated, the mean rate of exposures was 1.36 per 100,000 in 2022. In states where delta-8-THC was banned, the mean rate of exposures in this same year was 0.17 per 100,000. While Ohio Poison Centers currently project an increased volume of calls, increased consultations with healthcare providers, and the need for additional public education programs to combat these exposures, Senate Bill 326 represents the next evidence-based, research proven that step we can take to protect Ohio's children.

While we can anticipate some ways this industry is impacting the state of Ohio, we have yet to understand its full impact. Ohio's Poison Control Centers will clearly play a vital role in effectively tackling these challenges. We are a unique combination of clinical care, cost effectiveness, public health surveillance, and interaction with patients, families, and those on the front lines including healthcare providers and law enforcement.



Chairman Wilkin and members of the committee, thank you for allowing us to testify today on the critical role Ohio Poison Centers play in keeping our children and families safe. We will gladly answer any questions.

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