

Opposition to SB326

Thank you, members of the committee for the opportunity to provide written testimony today.

My name is Brandon Mullins, and I am the owner of Elevate Montgomery, a small business in Montgomery, Ohio that specializes in lab tested compliant hemp-derived products for persons 21+. I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed bill, as it strips most of the hemp industry's economic opportunities and hands them over to dispensaries.

This proposal isn't regulation—it's a hostile takeover of an industry built by small businesses like mine. Over the past several years, entrepreneurs like myself, farmers, and retailers have worked tirelessly to build the hemp industry into a thriving economic sector. We've invested our time, money, and passion into creating products that consumers trust. With these proposed rules, the success we've built is being funneled away to dispensaries that had no role in creating this market.

The personal economic impact of this decision would be devastating for my family and me along with:

1. **The Small Businesses Sacrificed:** Thousands of hemp businesses, many of which are family-owned like mine, would be forced to close their doors. My business employs 4 people, and supports 25 farms and suppliers. All of this would vanish.
2. **Economic Consolidation:** This policy would consolidate nearly the entire hemp market into the hands of a few dispensaries, eroding competition and harming consumers. Concentrated markets mean higher prices, fewer choices, and less innovation.
3. **Misuse of Consumer Trust:** Hemp consumers have supported this industry because of its accessibility and transparency. Forcing these products into dispensaries alienates the very customers who helped grow this market. I can specifically think of scores of our customers who would never visit a dispensary because of social stigma in their community

It's especially galling to see this industry, which was built by the sweat equity of small business owners, farmers, and local retailers, handed over to entities that played no role in its establishment. Hemp businesses were the pioneers who navigated the legal areas, educated the public, and created the infrastructure that dispensaries now stand to inherit.

This isn't about safety or consumer protection—it's a power grab that benefits a select few at the expense of many. Instead of rewarding the businesses that built this industry, these rules would dismantle them. My company has worked tirelessly to provide safe, adult only products in our community and to operate with the highest ethical standards, and it is inconceivable how this in any way harms our community.

I urge this committee to reject this proposal and work with hemp industry stakeholders to create fair, balanced policies that protect our small businesses, preserve competition, and respect the investments and efforts of those who made this industry what it is today.

Brandon Mullins
Elevate Montgomery
10770 Montgomery Rd
Suite B
Cincinnati, Ohio 45242