

Chairman Wilkin, Vice Chairman Reineke, Ranking Member DeMora and all members of the Senate General Government Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

As a dedicated and licensed nurse in the great state of Ohio, I stand before you today to express my profound concern regarding the potential ban of hemp products or the restriction of their sale to only licensed dispensaries. This proposal, while perhaps well-intentioned, could have unforeseen and detrimental consequences for both the healthcare community and the general public, particularly our elderly population.

First and foremost, I would like to clarify the distinction between hemp and marijuana. Hemp, which is derived from the *Cannabis sativa* plant, is a non-psychoactive variant that contains less than 0.3% of THC, the compound responsible for the intoxicating effects of marijuana. It is rich in CBD, which has been widely recognized for its therapeutic benefits, including pain relief, anxiety reduction, and support for a variety of other health issues. It is essential that we do not conflate hemp with marijuana, as they are fundamentally different substances with varying applications and regulations.

As a healthcare professional, I have witnessed firsthand the positive impact that hemp-derived CBD products have had on the lives of many of my patients. These products provide a natural alternative to traditional medications, which can often come with a plethora of side effects and potential risks, especially for our elderly population. Many of my patients have found relief from chronic pain, improved sleep, and reduced anxiety through the use of CBD, allowing them to maintain a higher quality of life without the need for prescription drugs.

Now, let me address the implications of such a ban on my professional career and those of my colleagues. As a nurse, my primary duty is to advocate for the health and well-being of my patients. However, the current wording of the proposed legislation could potentially put my job at risk. If I were to be seen shopping at a licensed dispensary, even for the sole purpose of purchasing legal hemp products, it could be misconstrued as engaging in activities that could compromise my professional license. This is not a risk I, or any other healthcare worker, should have to take. We are committed to serving our communities and should not be penalized for accessing legal products that could potentially improve our health and well-being.

Moreover, the convenience and accessibility of hemp products are crucial for my patients, many of whom are elderly and may not feel comfortable entering a marijuana dispensary due to the stigma that still surrounds it. The local smoke shops and other retailers that currently sell these products often have more convenient hours and are closer to home for many of them. These individuals have served our state with distinction throughout their lives and deserve the dignity and ease of purchasing legal products that could alleviate their ailments without the burden of traveling long distances or facing social discomfort.

By restricting the sale of hemp products to licensed dispensaries, we are inadvertently creating barriers to health and wellness for those who need it most. Older adults, who may be less techsavvy or have limited mobility, might find it challenging to navigate the dispensary system, which often requires extensive paperwork and a significant amount of time. Furthermore, the atmosphere of a dispensary might be intimidating to some, leading them to avoid seeking the relief that hemp can provide.

As a nurse, I have a unique perspective on the health challenges that Ohioans face every day. The legalization of hemp has opened up a world of possibilities for those struggling with chronic conditions, and it is my belief that we should be expanding access to these products, not limiting them. By allowing hemp products to be sold in a variety of retail settings, we are ensuring that all citizens, regardless of age or background, have the opportunity to explore natural options for their health.

In conclusion, I implore you to consider the broader implications of this legislation. A ban or strict regulation of hemp products would not only infringe on the personal freedoms of Ohio's citizens but also hinder the ability of healthcare professionals like me to advocate for and utilize alternative treatment options for our patients. It would force individuals to choose between their health and the potential scrutiny of their professional lives, and it would deny our seniors the comfort and dignity of accessing products that could significantly improve their quality of life.

Let us continue to promote public health and well-being by keeping hemp products accessible in various retail locations. Do not let the stigma of marijuana overshadow the incredible potential of hemp.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this critical issue. I trust that you will make a decision that reflects the will of the people and the spirit of Ohio's commitment to progress and prosperity.

Sincerely,

Jasmine Trowbridge  
Licensed Nurse, Cleveland, Ohio

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