
Prevention Action Alliance

Lifetime Prevention | Lifetime Wellness

Senate Bill 103

Ohio Senate Health Committee

Prevention Action Alliance

November 15, 2023

Chairman Huffman, Vice-Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Health Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent written testimony on Senate Bill 103, a bill to regulate Kratom processing, sale and distribution. My name is Fran Gerbig, and I am the Executive Director of Prevention Action Alliance (PAA). PAA is a statewide nonprofit prevention agency based in Columbus, Ohio and has been in existence for over thirty years. Prevention Action Alliance is dedicated to leading healthy communities in the prevention of substance misuse and the promotion of mental health wellness. Our organization offers an abundance of resources, training services, grants and advocacy opportunities for those who are active in the prevention and mental health fields.

While Kratom is not considered a controlled substance by most states nor the federal government, the use of kratom is not recommended by the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) and the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) has it listed as a drug of concern. Researchers who have studied kratom think its harmful side effects and safety problems more than outweigh any potential benefits. Poison control centers in the United States received 1,800 reports involving the use of kratom from 2011 through 2017, including reports of death. Half of these exposures resulted in serious negative outcomes such as seizures and high blood pressure. Five of the seven infants who were reported to have been exposed to kratom went through withdrawal.¹

Nationally it is estimated that 10.9 million users of drugs other than alcohol reported they were using these substances “a little more or much more” than they did before the COVID-19 pandemic began.² At a time when Ohio families are grappling with unprecedented addiction compounded by the stress of dealing with the aftermath of a global pandemic, we consider the commercialization of an addictive drug with such scientifically proven public health harms to be unacceptable.

¹ “Kratom: Unsafe and Ineffective.” Mayo Clinic, Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 28 Jan. 2022, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/consumer-health/in-depth/kratom/art-20402171>.

² “Samhsa Releases 2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health.” SAMHSA, 26 Oct. 2021, <https://www.samhsa.gov/newsroom/press-announcements/202110260320>.

Under this bill, the regulation, sale, and distribution of Kratom fails to highlight the negative risks to a person's mental and physical health that have been documented. These risks include nausea, seizures, hallucinations, and other psychotic symptoms. Some users have reported becoming addicted to Kratom. At this time, there are no specific medical treatments or behavioral therapies for kratom addiction. Scientists need more research to determine effective treatment options.

We recommend that with the limited information and potential health harms pertaining to kratom, that this bill creates parity of purchasing other substances like tobacco, alcohol and now marijuana, to have an age limit of 21 and older. The risks to brain development are largely unknown, and as a result we fear that having the purchasing age of 18 and over will provide opportunities for youth to obtain kratom products from their peers.

Thank you again for allowing me to provide written testimony. If there are any questions, I would be happy to answer them via phone or email.