

My name is Isaac and I am a recovered victim of the Ohio opioid epidemic. The first time I picked up a needle was at age 16. The first time I buried a friend and overdose victim was at age 17. I received two felonies due to my addiction at age 20, one of which was stealing food because I was homeless and starving to death while living in a motel room with four other addicts. After I received my felonies, I was sentenced to a program in Florida that saved my life and allowed me to get the training necessary to become an addictions counselor. In the subsequent years I helped hundreds of men fix their life and addictions...but the loss of close friends did not stop. The last friend I lost (that I'm aware of) was at age 25 and he was the closest friend I had made since getting off opiates. He was a father of 2 and died due to an opiate overdose a day after he and I returned from a road trip to see a band in northern Florida.

To say I am an expert in opiate addiction (both in myself and others) is a severe understatement. So, believe me when I tell you, this knee jerk reaction you are having to a substance you clearly don't fully understand and thus fear WILL cause many to die. To clarify I am speaking about plain leaf kratom and its safe extracts, NOT 7OH or any derivatives of the alkaloids found inside kratom. This attempt to steamroll legislation in order to enact a blanket ban on plain leaf kratom is shortsighted and goes against what other states with common sense kratom regulation and the FDA / peer review scientific studies say. Furthermore, the ban will cause many small businesses who sell kratom to go out of business, and push those using kratom for opiate withdrawals (quitting illegal or legal opioids) and pain management to go back to either using illegal alternatives like fentanyl or paying for legal "safe" alternatives like Suboxone or methadone that are 100 times more likely to be abused, sold, or cause physical addiction and overdose than kratom. Has the last fifty years of the War on Drugs and multiple attempts at prohibition of different substances taught our leaders nothing?

Would you like to know what it feels like to quit the legal alternatives pushed by big pharma such as methadone or suboxone? It feels like your skull and the rest of your bones are melting....for weeks. The withdrawals caused by these legal alternatives are far worse than heroin and yet they aren't just legal, they are still actively pushed by big pharma in the state of Ohio. So now you would deprive people who want to get off prescription opiates and illegal narcotics by using kratom as a cheap alternative that is far safer with a far lower rate of physical and mental addiction because you fear it will be sold to children or that it is somehow more dangerous than all of the legal drugs you still allow to be sold like tobacco or alcohol despite there being no credible evidence (anecdotal at best) in favor of this opinion?

Sidenote: I started smoking at age fourteen, yet tobacco or alcohol is never on the chopping block, odd. Perhaps Governor Dewine could clarify why this is the case before he leaves office. It is also odd to hear the basic go-to pearl clutching statement of the 90s (once regarding violent video games and children) always be used as an excuse to push unpopular legislation with zero evidence of it's actual danger to society...perhaps because it is an emotionally charged statement designed to get people to disregard what the actual facts are. Perhaps parents should be more involved in their children's lives and state regulation should exist to punish those who actually sell age restricted items to minors instead of making the restricted item illegal for everyone. I will continue with my normal statement now.

Your attempt to do this ban is not backed up by science. The FDA knows this, the DEA knows this, even the Florida government of all places knows this, yet this regulatory board in Ohio seems to know better than all these organizations for some reason? It's no secret that Dewine hates kratom because it's clear he doesn't actually understand what it is nor its benefits to the people of Ohio, which is unfortunate seeing as how Ohio continues to be one of the worst states in America when it comes to the opiate epidemic. The science is clear plain leaf kratom and its extracts (again not referring to 7OH or derivatives) do not cause respiratory repression which is the primary way an opiate overdose kills. Cherry picking several cases that you think proves your point, despite nearly every deadly "overdose" involving kratom also involving a cocktail of other drugs in the user, does nothing but prove incompetence and bias in your decision. Mixing alcohol and ibuprofen (or most other things) will kill you, yet they are legal, children were eating Tide Pods not 5 years ago and yet they are also legal. Use common sense because the fact remains that tens of thousands of Americans (at least) safely use kratom daily across the US for a variety of reasons, and the majority would say their lives have been improved due to its legality. I want to also make clear that not once in my experience as an addiction's counselor did I ever meet someone (or see in my own addiction) who started their opiate addiction with kratom. Nearly all started and still start by getting a prescription from their doctors for legal opiates and then switch to black market narcotics once they can no longer get them from their doctor or are introduced straight to illegal opiates by friends (as I was). Those serious about quitting opiates either attempt to go cold turkey and suffer withdrawals or use kratom to help soften those withdrawals, those who want to continue to get as high as possible despite appearing "clean" will use methadone or suboxone despite them knowing the eventual withdraws will be far worse than heroin itself.

Do not make this mistake in Ohio, do not cause people to look for alternatives after it is banned and end up dead or in prison or losing their small business because an Ohio regulatory board

that was politically pressured by a governor who is not seeking re-election due to being unpopular made a biased decision whilst disregarding all of the current scientific facts we have about kratom. I am sure the subsequent opioid overdose numbers post ban will not be pretty and that'd you'd like to sleep well at night knowing you don't have unnecessary blood on your hands. Look to other states that have successfully regulated kratom, copy their regulations and ban the derivatives if you must, but for the love of God and the Ohioans who use kratom do not schedule plain leaf and its pure extracts as if it were meth or fentanyl. It clearly has medicinal value and it's clearly far safer than alcohol, tobacco, suboxone, methadone, or fentanyl. Lastly, I must make it clear that even comparing kratom to morphine in regards to psychoactive effects or addiction potential is equal to comparing coffee to methamphetamine.

I will be happy to testify in person should the need arise. Do not make this mistake, I beg you.

Signed,

A guy who'd still have friends had they known about kratom instead of suboxone or methadone