

Subject: Please Oppose Scheduling Natural Kratom in Ohio

Dear Representatives,

I am writing to respectfully ask that you oppose any effort to schedule or criminalize natural *Mitragyna speciosa* (kratom) under Ohio law.

For more than a decade, kratom has played a vital role in my life. I struggled with opioid addiction in my youth, and kratom was the tool that allowed me to break free from that cycle. It helped me transition away from dangerous substances and remain sober. Because of this plant, I am alive today, stable, and a productive member of society. I know many other Ohio residents with similar stories.

At a time when fentanyl continues to devastate communities across the state, removing access to a lower-risk botanical alternative could have serious unintended consequences. Many adults use kratom specifically to avoid prescription opioids or to stay away from illicit drugs contaminated with fentanyl. Criminalizing it would not eliminate demand — it would only push people toward more dangerous substances.

It is also important to distinguish between natural plain leaf kratom and highly concentrated or laboratory-modified compounds such as isolated 7-hydroxymitragynine. These are not the same products. Plain leaf kratom is a traditional botanical that has been used for generations. If concerns exist about synthetic or highly concentrated extracts, those can be addressed through targeted regulation rather than banning the natural plant itself.

Reports of deaths in which kratom was mentioned have consistently involved multiple substances or serious underlying health conditions. Plain leaf kratom does not present the same respiratory depression risk profile as opioids. Scheduling it alongside dangerous narcotics would not reflect its pharmacological reality.

If action is deemed necessary, I respectfully urge you to consider a regulatory framework instead of prohibition, including:

- Age restrictions (21+)
- Mandatory product testing for contaminants
- Clear labeling requirements
- Limits on synthetic or ultra-concentrated derivatives

Responsible regulation protects consumers. Criminalization harms them.

Ohio residents who rely on kratom include veterans, working parents, people in recovery, and chronic pain sufferers who are trying to avoid opioids. Our voices deserve to be heard before access to this plant is taken away.

I respectfully ask that you oppose scheduling natural *Mitragyna speciosa* and instead support reasonable, science-based regulation.

Thank you for your time and service to the state. I would appreciate knowing your position on this issue.

Sincerely,

Dean Willis

Deanwillis3@gmail.com