

I have lived with Type 1 diabetes for many years, and kratom quite literally gave me my life back. Years ago, I was facing the reality of spending the rest of my life bedridden due to severe diabetic neuropathy.

With Type 1 diabetes, diet and exercise do not prevent complications in the same way they might for Type 2. I weigh 105 pounds and have always taken my health seriously. Yet despite careful management, my diabetes attacked my nerves. By 2006, I could barely walk. My endocrinologist told me that I would likely need to take narcotics for the rest of my life in order to have any quality of life.

Type 1 diabetes affects everyone differently. For some, it damages the kidneys or liver. For me, it damaged my nervous system. I refused to accept a future of heavy narcotics, liver damage, and feeling drugged every day just to function.

My doctor, who was originally from Thailand, suggested I try an herbal tea commonly used in her home country. She explained that it could relieve pain without causing sedation or liver damage like narcotics often do. Skeptical but desperate for relief, I purchased a small bag from a local herbal store.

When I got home, I made a tea using one teaspoon of the powder in hot water. Within twenty minutes, my pain was gone. Not reduced — gone. And I did not feel drugged or impaired in any way. It was nothing short of life-changing.

From that day forward, one teaspoon in the morning and one at night managed my pain completely — without any additional medications. I returned to work and continued building a successful career. That was twenty years ago, in 2006.

Because of my diabetes, I undergo liver and kidney function testing every six months. After two decades, my doctors continue to confirm there is zero damage to these organs — damage they would typically expect to see at this stage of the disease. I have never needed to increase my dosage. I live completely pain-free.

In fact, at 55 years old, I have run two marathons in the past five years — something that would have been unimaginable when I could barely walk.

Prescription pain medications are well known for their risks, and many physicians are now reluctant to prescribe them. I believe I have the right to choose the healthcare options that allow me to live a functional, fulfilling life — especially one that allows me to enjoy time with my grandchildren.

I have also tried THC after legalization and found it unpleasant and impairing. It affected my clarity and ability to function. Kratom, by contrast, has never caused intoxication or cognitive impairment for me.

Rather than banning kratom, many states have adopted the Kratom Consumer Protection Act (KCPA), which regulates production, requires laboratory testing, and ensures products are unadulterated and properly labeled. That is the approach that protects consumers.

For the past 15 years, I have purchased from the same Florida-based company. Every batch is tested in accordance with KCPA standards, and lab results are publicly posted. The company invested in expensive equipment to ensure safety and compliance. This is not gas station kratom — which I would never use. This is a carefully sourced, tested, 100% pure plant product.

Please take the time to research the states that initially considered bans but ultimately chose regulation instead. There are countless individuals — many older than I am — who rely on this plant to manage chronic pain. In twenty years of responsible use, it has caused me no harm. I do not even take Tylenol due to concerns about liver impact with my condition.

Please prioritize the well-being of the people you represent over the interests of pharmaceutical companies that continue to develop stronger narcotics. We deserve the right to make informed decisions about our own health and to live free from unnecessary suffering.

If one plant that causes intoxication can be legalized, surely a non-intoxicating plant that allows people like me to function and thrive deserves fair regulation rather than prohibition.

I respectfully ask that you do not support a ban on kratom as outlined in SB 587. Instead, support thoughtful regulation that protects consumers while preserving access. Thousands of Ohio citizens depend on it to manage their health responsibly.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to the voices of the people you serve. We need you to be our advocate.

Sincerely,

Kristi McClelland