

Hello my name is Madelynn Brafford and I would like to share my personal testimony in hopes of keeping Kratom legal in Ohio. I hope that you will listen to my story and consider protecting our access to this herbal medicine. I was born with a rare and incurable condition called Ehlers Danlos Syndrome Type 3 which causes me chronic pain. I experience many issues because of this, including joint instability, muscle weakness, and dystonia. Due to the fragility of my tissues, I often experience over 100 joint dislocations in a day. I have also had multiple TBIs. Because there is no cure yet, treatment is focused on managing symptoms.

Because I am dealing with mixed muscle tone issues, there are downsides to taking muscle relaxers for my dystonia, which is the primary treatment, because they will further weaken my muscles and joints which will cause more pain down the line. But something must be done for the pain caused by my dislocations and dystonia, because these muscle spasms can cause further dislocation and tissue damage. Even after trying prescription pain medications and muscle relaxers, I have had the best results with Kratom, and using it with MMJ prevents me from relying on these medications. It is also an inexpensive and natural way to control pain, which is what I must do when my pain medications aren't covered by my insurance. After a few minutes after I take a small spoonful of Kratom, there is an improvement in my dystonia that anyone looking at me can see.

Due to the bleeding risk from my EDS and family history of kidney and liver failure, it has been hard to control my pain. I have tried all different kinds of therapies, conventional and unconventional medicine, and joined many research studies. But in my own research I have settled on Kratom and MMJ to have the best results to control my pain. Years ago I decided to try it because my pain was not under control even with the 3-5 doctor's appointments I have every week. Before Kratom I did not have the bandwidth to control my pain and was not living a full life. Discovering it was like a miracle for me, and with the proper equipment I was able to go back to college, complete my degree, and enjoy a robust career. It gave me my life back in a way where I could live like I was before my diagnosis.

If Kratom is banned, I don't know what I will do. I have stopped Kratom a number of times when I had to for surgeries or medical procedures. Even after years of use, it was easy to wean myself off it in a few days. I think that a lot of the time people experiencing "Kratom withdrawals" are experiencing withdrawal from other substances or an increase in their pain etc symptoms due to stopping what was keeping it under control. But my worries are not about these temporary concerns. Everyone with chronic pain will be negatively impacted by a ban on Kratom. I imagine we will see an increase in overdose deaths and people selling tainted/fake Kratom. We are also likely to see increased suicides due to people with uncontrollable pain.

Kratom has given me back my career, and now the ban is about to rip out of my hands what I worked so hard for. I have been trying to get into this program for disabled entrepreneurs for over a year now, and it is finally my turn after serving my time on the waitlist. But if Kratom is banned, I know that I will be stuck in bed from pain and unable to manage even just going to my doctor's appointments. I definitely won't be able to get up and go to work every day. I cannot

grow as a person without proper control of my pain and symptoms. I cannot even take care of myself when my pain is uncontrolled.

Instead of a full ban, perhaps we could come to a compromise. Maybe we could treat Kratom like MMJ. We could use the taxes and revenue for local improvements, and establish avenues for testing products to make sure they are safe. We could also institute precautions, such as age or amount purchase limits. On the other side of the spectrum perhaps we could require a doctor's prescription. This is not ideal for many because many people don't have access to doctors, but it would be better than a full ban. I am actually in full support of banning synthetic Kratom products because these have increased dangers and cast the entire Kratom community in a negative light. Natural whole leaf Kratom has failsafes to protect from excessive ingestion whereas synthetic has been altered to bypass these, making it easier to abuse.

- I hope that you take the time to empathize with my story and consider legislation to protect our access to this herbal medicine. You may find yourself or someone you love in a situation like mine, and I know you don't want to see them limited by pain. We have done well by legalizing cannabis and I hope to see access to Kratom protected as well. I would encourage anyone who thinks Kratom is bad to think about my success story and how it gave me my life back. If Kratom is banned, what next? Will you ban other medicinal herbs like green tea, chamomile, or valerian? If Kratom is banned it will definitely be a dark time for me and the entire community with chronic pain. Please take steps to protect our access to this herbal medicine. While my condition may be rare, you may find yourself in a situation like mine due to illness or injury. Or it may be your loved one going through this and you feel helpless watching them suffer because they lost access to their medicine. Kratom has allowed me to be a better daughter, fiancée, caregiver, student, and person because I can show up and work beyond my limitations. I encourage you to consider my story when you decide the future of Kratom in Ohio. Thank you for giving me the time to share my testimony.