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March 3, 2026

Chairman Klopfenstein,
Vicechair Newman,
Ranking Member Miller, and
Members of the Agriculture Committee

Re: Robert Durkin's Testimony, HB 587

Dear Chairman Klopfenstein, Vicechair Newman, Ranking Member Miller, and
Members of the Agriculture Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 587.

My name is Bob Durkin. I serve as outside counsel to the American Kratom Association. In addition to being a practicing attorney, my background is as a registered pharmacist, residency trained, and board certified in Nuclear Pharmacy Practice at WRAMC, while a Pharmacy Office in the U.S. Army. I also hold a master's degree in molecular biology. Before entering the private practice of law, I was lucky enough to work at the Federal Food and Drug Administration for a little over 12 years. I began my time at FDA in the Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, working on compounding and unapproved new drugs. More importantly, I ended my time at FDA, about the last 6 years, as the Deputy Director of FDA's Office of Dietary Supplement Programs.

As such I have significant first-hand experience with understanding the safety, regulatory status, and public health impact of the food and dietary supplements marketed to American consumers. With this background I'd like to provide in my oral testimony some perspective or context concerning the regulation of the botanical, *Mitragyna speciosa*, commonly referred to as "kratom." I will emphasize that kratom is a complex issue that is easily confused if not understood in full context. The natural, unaltered kratom leaf, and the modification of kratom leaves into various commercial products, are each complex in themselves.

In my testimony on March 4, 2026, I will provide information, context, and advice concerning:

- The background of kratom and kratom-derived products;
- The regulatory path to market for kratom and kratom-derived products;
- The required safety of marketed kratom and kratom-derived products;
- The currently prevailing confusion and misconceptions concerning the differences between kratom and kratom-derived products and synthetic and semisynthetic products that falsely claim to be kratom-derived;

- The merit of HB 587 and how it includes important safeguards for Ohio citizens that consume kratom and kratom-derived products; and
- Answer any questions from the Committee.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or would like to discuss.

Respectfully,

/s/ Robert Durkin

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