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House Bill 587 Written Proponent Testimony
House Agriculture Committee
Julianne Nesbit, President, Association of Ohio Health Commissioners
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Chair Klopfenstein, Vice Chair Newman, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 587.

My name is Julianne Nesbit, and I serve as the President of the Association of Ohio Health Commissioners. I am testifying on behalf of the Association, representing Ohio's 111 local health departments.

From a public health perspective, House Bill 587 is an important step toward establishing basic safety standards for kratom products sold in Ohio.

Currently, kratom products are widely available in gas stations, smoke shops, and other retail settings with very limited oversight. As these products have become more common, we have concerns about inconsistent labeling, unknown potency, youth access, and the emergence of highly concentrated or synthetic compounds.

According to preliminary data from the Ohio Department of Health, kratom was found to be a cause of death in more than 200 unintentional overdose deaths in Ohio from 2019 to 2024.

House Bill 587 takes a reasonable regulatory approach by establishing safeguards that help protect consumers. The bill:

- Requires kratom products sold in Ohio to be registered with the Ohio Department of Agriculture
- Requires labeling that identifies key compounds in the product
- Prohibits the sale of kratom products to individuals under 18, and
- Prohibits synthetic kratom compounds and products with high levels of certain concentrated alkaloids.

These types of standards are common public health strategies used for many consumer products. They help ensure that individuals know what they are purchasing, reduce the likelihood of unsafe products entering the marketplace, and provide a framework for oversight. Consideration may also be given to raising the minimum purchase age to 21, consistent with Ohio law governing alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana. Aligning age standards across substances with potential health risks would further reduce youth exposure and reinforce the consumer safeguards established in House Bill 587.

While regulation is an important step forward now, it is important for Ohio to continue studying and monitoring the health impacts of kratom products. If evidence indicates ongoing risks to public health, policymakers should remain open to considering additional regulatory actions in the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued attention to policies that protect the health and safety of Ohio communities.