

April 29, 2025
The Honorable Jim Thomas, Chairman
House Building
77 S. High St, 11th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Chairman, Vice Chair, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 160.

As the Ohio Cannabis Coalition, we represent licensed cultivators, processors, dispensaries, testing laboratories and ancillary businesses that operate in Ohio's cannabis industry. I want to focus the majority of my testimony today on what we believe is an urgent threat facing Ohio today: the unregulated sale and distribution of intoxicating hemp products.

Today Ohio is building a successful, well-regulated, safe and responsible cannabis industry. Our businesses are employing thousands of people and making real investments in the communities they call home. OHCANN's members are committed to ensuring this industry operates in a way that allows adults to enjoy cannabis products while maintaining a safe environment for all Ohioans. Unfortunately, the intoxicating hemp industry does not feel the same way, undermining our efforts.

Taking advantage of an accidental loophole in the 2018 Farm Bill, gas stations, smoke shops, and convenience stores are now selling highly intoxicating, synthetically produced products, like delta 8 and delta 10, with no oversight. Not only do these products contain dangerously high levels of intoxicants but also contaminants such as pesticides, heavy metals, mold, and bacteria. This is not what Ohioans, or the legislature, voted to legalize.

These products pose a safety risk to all Ohioans, but we are especially concerned for Ohio's youth. In our industry, no one under the age of 21 years old is able to enter a dispensary, let alone attempt to buy products. For the intoxicating hemp industry? Not only are these products sold to people of all ages, but they often use colorful packaging resembling candy and cartoon characters, alongside the logos and trademarks of popular candy and snack foods, to market them directly to children. The consequences are not hypothetical. America's Poison Control Center has reported a surge in Delta-8 THC exposure among children, with 41% of cases involving children 12 and under.

House Bill 160 recognizes this growing threat and takes a vital step forward in curtailing this predatory industry. Let us be clear: HB 160 does not outlaw hemp or cannabinoid-based wellness products. Rather, it starts to draw a line between non-intoxicating products intended for wellness

and high-THC synthetics masquerading as legal hemp. By reclassifying these intoxicating products as marijuana, the state can protect Ohioans from dangerous, mislabeled, and often misleading products.

Additionally, House Bill 160 seeks to make changes to our industry. Our position has long been that changes to Issue 2 should wait until our industry is fully developed and we see what changes, if any, are needed. That being said, we believe HB 160 is a common-sense approach that balances the will of Ohio voters, who passed Issue 2, with the state's concerns. The bill respects the heart of the initiated statute: it maintains the right to home grow within the original limits, retains the 10% excise tax that supports economic development, explicitly allows for pre-rolls as a product type, and allows Ohio's regulated cannabis market to grow and compete with neighboring states.

While we look forward to continuing to work with the legislature to refine and improve HB 160, we believe the bill reflects a levelheaded and good-faith effort by Rep. Brian Stewart.

We thank you for your leadership and for addressing this issue with the urgency and seriousness it deserves.

David Bowling

Executive Director, OHCANN (Ohio Cannabis Coalition)