



House Judiciary Committee – Proponent Testimony, H.B. 198 – 04.30.2025

Good morning, Chairman Thomas, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Isaacsohn and members of the House Judiciary Committee. Thank you for the opportunity today to testify in to support House Bill 198.

My name is Hannah Kubbins, and I serve as Legislative Director for Americans for Prosperity – Ohio (AFP – OH). AFP believes in the power of free markets, but free markets can only thrive when they are transparent and predictable. While there are several regulatory proposals on this subject, we support H.B. 198 because we believe the bill promotes our belief in markets while also maintaining consumer safety.

Key features of the framework include:

- Requires manufacturers, distributors, and retailers of ingestible or inhalable hemp products to be licensed.
- Ensures product safety through mandatory independent testing for contaminants (heavy metals, pesticides, etc.).
- Requires accurate product labeling and age restrictions (sales limited to 21+).
- Prohibits vertical integration between manufacturers, distributors, and retailers (except for small beverage manufacturers).
- Empowers the Department of Agriculture to oversee and enforce rules.
- Protects employers' rights to regulate employee use like existing marijuana laws.

The bill promotes a stable, predictable market by implementing a statewide framework that will create certainty for businesses, investors, and consumers. A statewide approach will reduce local patchwork regulations, allowing businesses to scale more efficiently and reduce compliance costs.

Mandatory testing and labeling ensure customers can make informed purchasing decisions without government picking winners and losers. The requirements in the bill encourage competition based on quality, safety, and transparency.

H.B. 198 respects private enterprise by regulating only where necessary – safety, transparency, and youth access. No price controls, product bans, or heavy-handed restrictions are within the bill that would stifle innovation. Further, franchise and ownership rules prevent monopolistic vertical integration without banning small businesses from entering the market. While we don't normally advocate for new and/or additional licenses in Ohio, we recognize the necessity in this space and appreciate the flexible and affordable licensure process within H.B. 198.

H.B. 198 is smart regulation: narrow, targeted, and focused on true public goods like safety and free markets.

H.B. 198 levels the playing field, invites innovation, and gives entrepreneurs — from local farmers to startups — the opportunity to compete and grow. Smart, limited regulation like this is what fosters true market freedom. I urge support for House Bill 198 and am happy to take questions.