

Dr. Bridget Cole Williams Testimony - HB 198

My name is Dr. Bridget Cole Williams. I am an Ohio resident, a board-certified family physician, author, medical cannabis specialist and a local business owner. I completed my undergraduate degree at University of Michigan and earned my medical degree from Michigan State University - College of Human Medicine. I also completed my residency in Family Medicine at the Cleveland Clinic and was the chief resident during my time. I am currently a Forbes Health Advisory Board member, recognized CBD expert, sought-after national speaker, business owner and author of the bestselling book series "Courage in Cannabis". Additionally, I am the Medical Director of Care Alliance Health Center in Cleveland and an adjunct professor at John Hopkins University.

Beyond my work in the medical field and by utilizing my education and credentials, I have co-founded businesses in the beauty and lifestyle space and hemp-infused beverage space. My most recent business, The Blossom Bar, has allowed me to expand my focus to wellness-driven, alcohol-free experiences for my customers. The Blossom Bar is a mobile mocktail bar specializing in adaptogens, nootropics, and hemp-derived cannabinoids, offering unique functional beverages for events, private parties, and pop-ups.

In my career as a physician, I have witnessed the role hemp-derived products play in patient health. I have many patients who depend on these products as a safe, effective and natural alternative to pharmaceuticals. HB 198 institutes common-sense regulations without restricting access to products to a limited number of dispensaries in the state. By establishing regulations for proper testing, labeling and age restrictions, consumers can access safe products that are important to their overall wellness.

As a business owner, I welcome regulations that provide a safe space for consumers to access hemp-derived products. Responsible businesses like mine already operate under these regulations voluntarily and are eager for clear rules to help root out bad actors. We are in favor of codifying these regulations into law ensuring access to safe

products. By requiring licenses, enforcing quality standards, and setting age limits, HB 198 gives local, small businesses the opportunity to thrive and contribute to the local economy.

At one time I also was "anti-cannabis" I knew little about and saw it only as a way to waste valuable time and deter important goals. I learned from a patient early in my career there was much more to what cannabis and hemp could offer, the medicinal possibilities are just beginning and the historical stigma is harsh and typically exaggerated.

Before we limit access to patients that prefer hemp products over the dispensary experience or limit safe hemp options for those that prefer sobriety over alcohol indulgence, let us choose regulations and education over blanket limitations.

I am in full support of House Bill 198 and urge you to support this bill as well. Thank you for your time and consideration.