



May 7, 2025

The Honorable Jim Thomas, Chairman

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 testify on behalf the Ohio Cannabis Coalition (OHCANN). We represent licensed cultivators, processors, dispensaries, testing laboratories and ancillary businesses that operate in Ohio's cannabis industry. We stand in opposition to House Bill 198, a piece of legislation that, under the guise of regulation, would legitimize and expand the dangerous and unregulated market of intoxicating hemp products in Ohio.

This bill is not about regulating wellness products or supporting Ohio farmers and small businesses. It is about paving the way for a market that traffics in chemically modified, synthetic drugs mimicking the effects of marijuana without any of the safety protocols.

The proliferation of hemp-derived synthetic intoxicants like hhc, thco and thcp represents one of the most pressing public health threats in our state. These products are often synthesized in labs and sprayed onto plant material before being openly sold in gas stations, convenience stores, and smoke shops with no age restrictions, no testing, and no labeling standards. These products are then marketed directly to children with bright colors and cartoon characters and frequently are packaged to mimic popular candies and snacks.

These aren't rare incidents, each committee member could take a walk in their community and find these products being sold.

House Bill 198 will not fix these problems. In fact, it will compound them. The bill allows chemically produced synthetic cannabinoids, does not impose limits on potency, lacks comprehensive testing standards, and provides minimal funding for enforcement.

Of grave concern is the portion of this legislation that includes a "safe harbor" provision for production of these products making Ohio a national hub for the manufacture of dangerous, mislabeled hemp-derived drugs for export to other states.

Unlike Ohio's regulated cannabis industry, which is tested, taxed, and strictly age-gated, this bill creates a second, parallel market that is cheaper, more potent, and completely unaccountable. It



lets bad actors sidestep the entire regulatory framework that we've spent years building to protect public health.

This is not regulation, it is deregulation poorly disguised. Placing the profit of a few over Ohioans health.

Ohio must not become a sanctuary for the production and sale of synthetic, intoxicating hemp products. We urge the legislature to reject HB 198 and instead pursue comprehensive legislation that will hold bad actors accountable and align all intoxicating products, whether hemp-derived or not, under a single, regulated, public health-focused framework. We have just seen the unanimous passage of Senate Bill 86 in the Senate. This is the type of legislation we should be pursuing.

David Bowling

Executive Director, OHCANN (Ohio Cannabis Coalition)