

Testimony Opposing Substitute Senate Bill 56

By Gerald Moore Jr.

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Chair Thomas, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Isaacsohn, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Gerald Moore Jr., and I represent GEO Nonprofit and the Cannabis Consumers Coalition. I rise in strong opposition to Substitute Senate Bill 56.

While we all share a responsibility to implement cannabis reform safely and equitably, this bill undermines the intent and foundation of Issue 2, which was passed by 2.7 million Ohio voters. This legislation attempts to recriminalize the very people who have already borne the brunt of the failed War on Drugs.

Sub. SB 56 disproportionately impacts low-income and urban communities, especially during a time when Ohio is facing a housing crisis. Criminalizing cannabis use in cars—paired with steep fines—places an unfair burden on the same communities Issue 2 was intended to help uplift and restore.

Rather than returning to punitive policies, we should center our efforts on education, public health, and economic opportunity. Ohio is home to two land-grant universities, which puts us in a unique position to become a global leader in cannabis and hemp research, innovation, and workforce development.

I am also deeply concerned about the lack of inclusion for craft and small-scale growers. This bill favors corporate interests over everyday Ohioans and legacy operators who have been part of the cannabis community for years. The industry is already generating significant revenue in its infancy, and yet we're being outpaced by Michigan, where a more inclusive approach has driven both economic growth and community benefits.

Let's not forget: since cannabis legalization, we've seen decreases in opioid-related deaths and certain crime rates. Cannabis is not just an industry—it's a community, one that brings together people from diverse backgrounds and contributes to the overall health, wellness, and economic strength of our state.

I urge this committee to reject this bill because it contradicts the will of Ohio voters. Recriminalization in any form is unacceptable. Preventing legacy and informal market participants from entering the legal market not only stifles equity—it reinforces a system of economic exclusion that many of us are working hard to dismantle.

We also need to support safe, licensed consumption spaces, where adults can responsibly gather, socialize, and learn—just like we do in other industries that serve adults.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions.