



January 28, 2025

Ohio Senate
General Government Committee
Ohio Poison Centers Testimony - SB 56

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Backshear, and members of the committee:

Thank you for allowing us to submit testimony on the impact of intoxicating hemp products on Ohioans and our Poison Control Services. This testimony is submitted on behalf of Ohio Poison Control Centers (PCC), the joint effort of the Central Ohio Poison Center located at Nationwide Children's Hospital and the Drug and Poison Information Center located at Cincinnati Children's Hospital. Both Centers provide poison control services to all Ohioans at no cost 24 hours per day, 365 days per year.

Ohio Poison Control Centers (PCCs) provide immediate, trusted expert medical advice and drug information to individuals and families of all ages. Last year, we responded to more than 100,000 consultations, representing a poisoning or drug overdose every 6 minutes. One in five of these calls were received from emergency departments, first responders, or law enforcement professionals while responding to an overdose patient or poisoning victim.

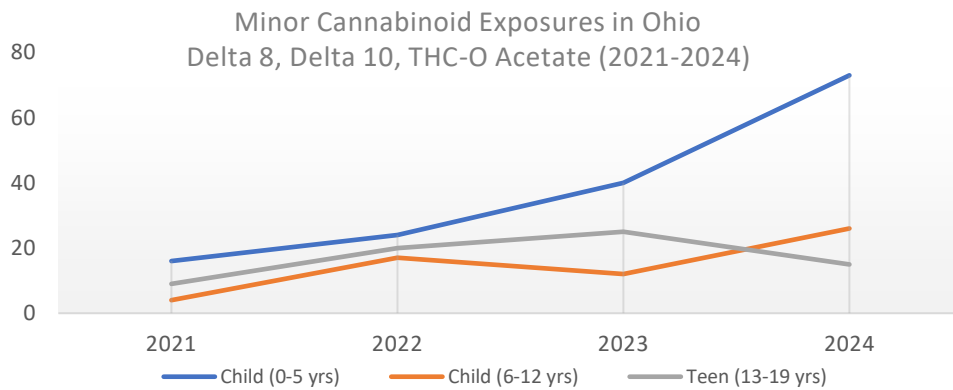
Poison Control services are provided by highly skilled physicians, pharmacists, and nurses who receive specialized training and certification in medical toxicology and related disciplines, including addiction medicine. It is well established that consultation with a poison center improves patient outcomes and lowers healthcare costs by reducing unnecessary ED visits, ambulance runs, and hospital length of stay. It is estimated that we save Ohioans nearly \$60 million dollars each year, which is second only to vaccines in savings per dollar invested.

Every call to the poison center is documented and uploaded to the National Poison Data System (NPDS) in real time. This data is used to identify and respond to emerging public health threats as well as to advance medical research. We can also adapt these data systems to support proactive risk evaluation and prevention strategies. For example, our data is used to monitor novel opioids, e-cigarettes, edible marijuana products, toxic mushroom exposures, and increased adolescent overdose and self-harm trends. Ohio Poison Centers play a key role in emergency preparedness and response, as demonstrated by the clinical guidance and situational awareness we provided during the East Palestine Train Derailment incident.

The number of accidental poisonings reported to Ohio Poison Centers increased 317% since these products became wide spread and poison centers developed the capability to track exposures in 2021. In children under 6 years, exposures have increased over 350%. When children access these products, they can experience severe symptoms including hallucinations, confusion, loss of consciousness, and respiratory failure. We currently receive several calls each day for exposures to cannabinoids, including intoxicating hemp products, in children under 6 years. A quarter of children who consume intoxicating hemp products require admission to the hospital, and more than a third of those admitted require ICU level care.

According to a study we published that analyzed over 5,000 pediatric exposures to delta-8, delta-10, and THC-O-acetate reported to America's Poison Centers in 2021 and 2022, over 95% of exposures to intoxicating hemp products in children under 6 years occur via ingestion of edible products. Because symptoms do not begin immediately after an edible ingestion, children have time to consume very large doses before anyone recognizes that something is wrong. When this happens, we often receive a call from EMS, requesting assistance in caring for a critically ill child while on scene and in transport.

It may surprise you that poison centers receive calls from law enforcement who are caring for someone with severe symptoms after an exposure to cannabis edibles. In my practice, I also receive phone calls almost weekly from child protective services and police officers who need my help understanding what happened, how to interpret laboratory testing, and how to support families with education and other prevention resources.



These accidental poisonings are negatively affecting children, families, and healthcare systems throughout Ohio and without this legislation, they may continue to increase. A recent study conducted by our group at Nationwide Children's Hospital found states transitioning from illegal to legal cannabis had significantly higher mean rates of delta-8-THC exposures than states not in transition. In this same study, the rate of delta-8-THC exposures was significantly lower in states where delta-8-THC was banned. In states where delta-8-THC was unregulated, the mean rate of exposures was 1.36 per 100,000 in 2022. In states where delta-8-THC was banned, the mean rate of exposures in this same year was 0.17 per 100,000. While Ohio Poison Centers currently project an increased volume of calls, increased consultations with healthcare providers, and the need for additional public education programs to combat these exposures, this legislation represents the next evidence-based, research proven that step we can take to protect Ohio's children.

While we can anticipate some ways this industry is impacting the state of Ohio, we have yet to understand its full impact. Ohio's Poison Control Centers will clearly play a vital role in effectively tackling these challenges. We are a unique combination of clinical care, cost effectiveness, public health surveillance, and interaction with patients, families, and those on the front lines including healthcare providers and law enforcement.



We are grateful for Senator Huffman's inclusion of child resistant packaging requirements and limitations on advertisement directed at minors, as these efforts will help protect children from these harmful products.

Chair Roegner and members of the committee, thank you for allowing us to testify today on the critical role Ohio Poison Centers play in keeping our children and families safe. Please support SB 56.

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