



Testimony in Favor of Senate Bill XXX - Revise Marijuana Laws. January 29, 2025

Chair Roegner and Members of the Committee,

I'm Rob Crane, a family physician and retired Clinical Professor of Family Medicine at Ohio State. I'm also the founder and board chair of the Preventing Tobacco Addiction Foundation and its advocacy arm, Tobacco 21. Over the last three decades we've been successful in hundreds of cities, 43 states and at the federal level in raising the legal minimum sales age for all nicotine products to 21.

You may wonder what I'm doing here talking about marijuana. For starters, I'm a substantial expert in adolescent addiction - as nicotine is the principal drug addiction in kids. But more importantly the parallels between the predatory nature of both the tobacco industry and the marijuana industry are striking. Both industries recognize they must hook kids early or their business model collapses.

So when the marijuana industry began discussing a statute in 2022, it seemed important that our Ohio kids have educated advocates on the subject. As such I became a principle researcher and author of the Ohio website: [WeedFreeKids.org](http://WeedFreeKids.org). I hope members of the committee will have an opportunity to visit there. The data I refer to today is scientifically reference on that site.

Let me begin by thanking Governor DeWine, Senator Huffman and Speaker Huffman for championing this bill, and I would be remiss in not mentioning the late great Senator Schuring for his early sponsorship, may he rest in peace. I think all of us recognize that Ohio voters passed a general measure to allow for recreational marijuana, but almost no one read the 50 page, 23,000 word document that then became law. Suffice it to say, the worst laws are those that only serve their authors. This bill is the first step in righting that wrong.

Let's talk about teenage addiction. We know that kids have an evolutionary drive to separate from their parents. That combine with their incredibly plastic brains puts them directly in the crosshairs of those who would serve them up addictive drugs and devices. That's why we set the bar at 21. That's why we as parents work so hard to keep our kids clean for as long as we can. But we aren't naive. Illegal underage sales, social sources, peer pressure and predatory kid social media marketing means we fight a tough battle. That's where thoughtful regulation comes in - to help parents and teachers, and our kids.

According to the National Institutes of Health and a host of other sources, about 30% of folks who regularly use marijuana will become addicted. By that I mean they use every day in high doses and suffer substantial withdrawal if they try to stop. These folks tend to have issues with motivation, concentration, mental health disorders, school and job

performance and are more likely to be in car crashes. The effects of long term addiction are so pervasive that they can be seen on brain scans.

The challenge is that like the tobacco industry, the marijuana industry is completely dependent on addiction to keep its business model alive. These 30% buy the vast majority of product. Some researchers suggest it's 80%. They can't survive on the folks who share a joint on Saturday night, or even people who have a gummy to help them sleep. They must have addicts.

And how do you get addicts? Well, you have to start them young and you have to hit them hard. You have to physically change the architecture of their brains. High dose - early use.

So very briefly what does this bill do to rein in those who would go after our kids.

One, it stops the foxes from managing the henhouse. On many issues, the division of cannabis control has discretion. And it's important they put our kids first.

Two, it begins to regulate the dose. The industry isn't pushing lite beer here, they peddle the equivalent of grain alcohol. Regulating the dose size at 10 mg is a good first step, but it's still too high, 5 mg is better. Unfortunately the allowed concentration of THC is still way too high - 70% for concentrates - that's the grain alcohol equivalent, and 30% for the smokable "flower." Note that's 10 times the potency of just 15-20 year ago - super weed.

This bill does a pretty good job on product labeling and reducing kid friendly names. We hope that cannabis control will look at candy flavors and colors.

We'll need to watch homegrown. 6 plants are allowed - at 4 crops a year - that will product close to 2000 marijuana cigarettes. Seems like a lot.

What the bill doesn't address is where the money goes. Job one should be to protect our kids. Let our health department and universities be funded to see what's happening with kids so we can course correct if necessary. More than that we need to counter the onslaught of online social media promoting use. We must fund powerful kid-friendly messages and influencers that tell the truth.

I've talked too long. Please visit [WeedFreeKids.org](http://WeedFreeKids.org). Let's put our kids first.

Thank you.

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