

Testimony Opposing Ohio Senate Bill 56

Presented to the Ohio Senate Committee

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Chairperson, Vice Chair, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Don, and I'm here to speak in strong opposition to Senate Bill 56.

I support responsible cannabis regulation, but this bill isn't about regulation—it's about control. It protects corporate interests, eliminates competition, and undermines the very foundation of what Ohio voters approved when they passed Issue 2.

Let's be clear: Ohio does not need SB 56. What Ohio needs is a fair, open market that fosters opportunity, protects consumers, and ensures equity for the communities that were harmed the most by cannabis prohibition. This bill does the opposite.

1. SB 56 Eliminates Social Equity Licenses

Not reduces—eliminates. Completely removes Level 3 cultivation and dispensary licenses, cutting off opportunities for small, minority-owned, and independent businesses before they even have a chance to enter the market.

Ohio promised a social equity program—now, before it even starts, this bill erases it. The same people who were disproportionately criminalized for cannabis are now being told they can't participate in the industry. How is that fair?

2. This Bill Hands the Market to Big Business

SB 56 automatically grants adult-use licenses to existing medical operators while forcing new applicants into a limited, competitive licensing process.

- All current medical marijuana businesses will automatically receive adult-use licenses.
- New applicants will have to fight for a limited number of remaining licenses—if any are even available.

- This locks in corporate dominance before the adult-use market opens fully.

The state should not be picking winners and losers. The adult-use market should be open to all qualified businesses, not just those already in the game.

Additionally, the bill:

- Limits dispensary ownership to 8 locations per company, which favors large multi-state operators while restricting independent businesses.

- Severely restricts the number of new cultivation and dispensary licenses, leading to fewer options and higher prices for consumers.

Ohio's adult-use market should not be handed over to existing medical businesses while everyone else is forced to wait in line.

3. No Delivery? No Accessibility. No Progress.

SB 56 fails to legalize cannabis delivery. That's a major issue.

- This cuts off elderly, disabled, and rural consumers who may not have access to a dispensary.
- Other legal states—including Michigan, Massachusetts, and California—have safe and successful cannabis delivery programs.
- Without legal delivery, Ohio falls behind, and businesses that could create jobs will be locked out.

If alcohol and prescription drugs can be delivered, why not cannabis?

4. Local Bans Create Cannabis Deserts and Fuel the Illicit Market

SB 56 allows local governments to block dispensaries, processors, and cultivators—even when their residents voted for legalization.

That means:

☑ Voters say YES to legal cannabis.

✗ Local officials say NO.

That's not democracy, that's gatekeeping.

- This creates 'cannabis deserts' where people have to drive hours for legal access.
- And when access is limited, illegal sales flourish.

If Ohio is serious about public safety and eliminating the black market, we need a statewide access policy—not a patchwork of bans.

5. Home Grow Restrictions Are Government Overreach

SB 56 places unreasonable restrictions on home cultivation:

- Six plants per household—not per adult.
- Costly security requirements that make it harder for everyday Ohioans.
- No sharing, gifting, or trading homegrown cannabis.

Let me ask you this:

- Can Ohioans brew their own beer at home? Yes.
- Can Ohioans grow their own tomatoes? Yes.
- But now, somehow, growing six cannabis plants is a security threat?

This isn't about public safety. It's about control.

Home grow should be expanded to at least six plants per adult, not per household.

Additionally, home cultivators should have the ability to test and sell to dispensaries and develop their own brands, fostering a thriving small business ecosystem.

6. SB 56 Introduces New Marijuana Taxes—With No Consumer Protections

We know taxes are coming—but where's the transparency?

- The bill does not specify how high the taxes will be or where the money will go.
- Other states have seen over-taxation push consumers back to the illegal market.
- California is a prime example—legal products became so expensive that 60% of cannabis sales still happen underground.

Without clear tax limits and price protections, Ohio will repeat the same mistakes.

7. Where's the Criminal Justice Reform?

This bill does nothing to address past cannabis-related convictions. Nothing for expungements. Nothing for record sealing.

- People are still carrying criminal records for something that's now legal.
- Meanwhile, corporations are cashing in on the industry while those people are locked out.

If this bill truly supported justice and equity, it would include automatic expungements and pathways for past offenders to enter the industry.

Final Thoughts: Ohio Deserves Better Than SB 56

This bill isn't about consumer safety. It isn't about responsible regulation. It's about control, corporate monopolies, and shutting out competition.

If this committee truly wants to regulate cannabis in Ohio the right way, I urge you to:

- Legalize cannabis delivery to ensure access for all.

- Allow all qualified businesses to compete, don't just hand the market to medical operators and out-of-state corporations.
- Expand home grow rights to at least six plants per adult, not per household. Allow home cultivators to sell to dispensaries and develop their own brands.
- Set clear, reasonable tax rates to keep legal products competitive.
- Strengthen social equity provisions, restore Level 3 licenses, and expunge past convictions.

Ohio voters wanted real legalization. Let's not allow corporate interests to water it down. I urge this committee to reject SB 56 in its current form and support a bill that actually reflects the will of the people.

Thank you for your time. I welcome any questions.