

Opponent Testimony for SB56
General Government Committee
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Hello, My name is Eric Whited, and I am a daily cannabis user, both medicinally and as an adult-use consumer. I grow my own cannabis, and I conduct homegrow and processing consultations and do education sessions in my spare time. I have a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from the University of South Florida. Through my work as a Brand Ambassador at a Level 1 Cultivator, I work with processors and dispensaries daily and have worked in both the medical and adult-use sectors. I speak to hundreds of patients and consumers every week. I learn from sales associates, buyers and managers in retail stores. I support Chapter 3780 of Ohio's Revised Code. During this testimony- I do not speak for any company or organization; rather I am speaking up for myself and the cannabis community I am a part of. I am here today to oppose the many changes put forth by SB56.

Our state has done many things right during our battle for cannabis, and I would like to personally thank those of you that had a hand in that process. Though we have made great strides, our community believes the program is suffering from three major weaknesses. First, the education regarding cannabis by the state, and the lack of adequate testing for the everyday user shows an unfortunate lack of consumer health and safety. Secondly, raising and shifting the taxes to the General Revenue Fund, rather than strengthening our community through social equity and addiction programs would be a disservice to both the cannabis community, and the community at large. Finally, the attack on homegrow rights is not based on provable data, and would only serve to restrict citizens' access to safe medicine.

It is my passion and calling to educate the public regarding cannabis. I consider users of this plant my community and my constituents. Today I aim to collaborate with the members of the General Government Committee in representing their constituents to provide perspective and testimony from a grassroots community. I'd like to start where I start with an everyday person that approaches me in my work and wants to know more about cannabis. I understand that the members of this Committee have done their research, but ensuring we are operating from the same facts is important for a meaningful conversation.

All humans have an endocannabinoid system (ECS) containing CB1 and CB2 receptors which interact with naturally produced cannabinoids to regulate and signal across the body, for various functions including mood, sleep, immune function, neurological function, pain perception, and much more. The FDA's recognition of the effect of minor cannabinoids supports this science. I would also like to appreciate your colleague on this Committee, Senator Huffman, for his work on another piece of legislation, SB86, providing more clear definitions to protect the consumers in this state. SB86 is a great starting point to regulate the current illicit market that exists due to loopholes regarding THCa and THCA Δ 8, that also acknowledges the medical benefits of many other minor cannabinoids. However, the need for this additional legislation

evidences the importance of having an educated and informed consumer base and highlights some of the issues in SB56, which we are here today to discuss.

To provide a safer market for all of Ohio, as is the intended goal with this legislation, this committee has an opportunity to create an informed and protected consumer base. This requires investing in education and testing for the everyday user. The state could provide general education on the history of hemp and cannabis. We could also teach the public about the health benefits AND side effects of cannabis, as well as the psycho-active and non-psycho active impacts of various cannabis compounds. This could also lead to a collaborative effort between the state and medical users to provide proper dosage and limits to medical products. Our current market has limited options outside of Rick Simpson Oil (RSO), and patients with diabetes or other health concerns have limited options if they require a higher dosage.

To the medical patient, many of the existing and proposed restrictions on THC limits are not founded in medical dosage recommendations. Comments from our representatives about concentrate limits being compared to orange juice concentrate are insulting to both the producers of the medicine and those who need it, and add to our daily fight against the stigma of using this medicine. I talk to individuals DAILY in my work that can't find products on Ohio's market that provide them a medical dosage, and find better dosage in previously-existing markets, i.e. Michigan or the Legacy market. Their only other option is to grow their own cannabis and create their own edibles with doses that can provide substantial relief and improved quality of life, without having to worry about organ failure and processor issues (edibles can use up to 5 different organs to be absorbed and provide relief, gummies only utilize 2). I have many of these testimonies in my inbox on my email, my instagram and directly shared with me in my work.

Many users find that homegrown cannabis is the best way to provide themselves with safe, affordable medicine and the sense of providing oneself can not be understated, something that both the liberal and conservative members of this body should be able to understand. There are a bevy of factors that affect a homegrown yield, therefore there is no way to calculate an average weight of yield of an individual plant. Furthermore, depending on what the grower is using the cannabis for, i.e. extracts, edibles or topicals, a much higher yield is required to provide a worthwhile return for their work. Many users find that homegrown cannabis is their only route to avoid cannabis that has been shown the proper care post-harvest. The dry, cure and storage of cannabis flower and extracts is a very important part of the process that can be overlooked at the commercial scale. Finally, the majority of commercial facilities in this state have remediation machines on site, which they can use on any of their products before testing.

Remediation machines are devices that remove mold, bacteria, and other microbial life forms from cannabis utilizing radiation or other technology. Ohio's cannabis program currently allows cultivators to remediate their product without this being labeled on the final product. Remediation does not remove the mold or other microbial life, it only kills it. The long-term health impacts of consuming remediated flowers have not been studied, and it has not been confirmed safe for humans to inhale remediated plant material. As the General Government Committee has stated, one of their broader goals in SB56 is to protect the consumers and public. Requiring cultivators to report when their cannabis has been remediated would be an incredible stride, and make us more competitive with other markets.

In this testimony, I have highlighted many successes of our existing program, as well as shining light on places that could use the help. I do not propose the state take on more work

without funding, however the current change to the excise tax structure is an overreach. The voters chose to pass Issue 2 with a 10% excise tax, in addition to the state and local tax. The state and local sales tax is sent to the Ohio General Revenue Fund (GRF). Most forms of tax revenue go back to support the area in which they are collected, including tolls, property tax, school levies, etc. Rather than the excise tax funding employment programs, social equity, substance abuse and addiction, and other initiatives voted on by the people, the increased 15% tax will all be directed to the GRF. Rather than gutting social equity and community development, I propose instead the state carve out 10% of the existing excise tax (at 10%) and use that to fund education and testing for individuals. Our Great State of Ohio could recoup millions of dollars in sales that are currently going untaxed or collected by other states. This tax revenue could increase by capturing the existing commerce by providing a proper framework to include more players, all while funding said framework with an already established tax structure.

Voters have chosen to have their legal adult-use cannabis purchases help create a safer state for all of us. I am asking this Senator Roegner, Committee Chair to listen to my testimony, and listen to the will of the people. I am asking for our legislature to provide education, testing and support to the already existing market and community. Rather than trying to control a market that has existed for decades, I am asking our representatives to manage that Legacy market, rather than continue a losing fight. I am asking that everyday people are given a chance in this industry.

Thank you.

Eric Whited