

**STATEMENT OF ARIANE KIRKPATRICK  
IN OPPOSITION TO SENATE BILL 56**

Before the Senate General Government Committee  
Senator Kristina D. Roegner, Chair

**READ FROM HERE 493 WORDS:** Chairwoman Roegner, Gavarone, and Blackshear and members of this committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today in opposition to Senate Bill 56. My name is Ariane Kirkpatrick, CEO of Mavuno a retail dispensary in Athens, Ohio. This summer, we will open two dispensaries in Ohio.

Mavuno is a small, Black-owned family-operated cannabis retail business. Our path into the cannabis industry came as a result of Ohio's social equity program. Although the social equity provided access, the road to opening our facilities and receiving our certificates of operation, was challenging. Given decades of experience as a business owner in the construction industry and as the Chief Housing Director in Warrensville Heights, OH, under the mayorship of Marcia L. Fudge, former US Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, I was able to transfer my business skills to realize a successful cannabis company with the support of a dynamic team.

Raised by a mother who was a schoolteacher and a father who worked in sales, my sister, who is the COO of Mavuno, and I have always believed in the power of education to inform, inspire, and transform lives. As policy makers you may want to consider advancements in critical research to gain additional education to make informed decisions that can help people in our communities learn and thrive.

I stand here today committed to creating pathways to careers in cannabis and advocating for those looking to access this industry. My experiences have shown me the importance of reaching back and helping others on their journey, so they don't face the same obstacles that I did but begin with a fair and equitable playing field.

It's essential that we establish cannabis industry-specific programs focused on economic growth and workforce development. This would provide training and certifications needed to help people build careers in this industry, creating

thousands of job opportunities. It will establish clear industry standards, making sure businesses and employees understand regulations, safety protocols, and responsible operations. It could offer financial support, like grants and low-interest loans, to help new cannabis owners and operators grow their businesses. It will strengthen collaboration between businesses and regulators, ensuring the cannabis industry expands in a way that is sustainable, responsible, and boosts jobs and economic growth.

The future of the cannabis industry here in Ohio relies on collaboration. And perhaps more importantly, to continue to create a program that our voters voted on. In a climate where lots of sweeping changes are being made in our political system and the way we do business, let's not be the culprits of not listening to the will of the people. The people spoke to elect our U.S. president, the people spoke to legalize medical and eventually, adult-use cannabis in Ohio. Let's not pick and choose when to make it by the people, for the people. Let's not be that state.

Thank you for allowing all of our voices to be heard today; I pray you listen.