



GENERAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

Witness Form

Today's Date 02/16/2025

Name: Jess Laurello

Address: 6147 McNutt Ave., Ashtabula, Ohio 44004

Telephone: 440.474.3408

Organization Representing: Italian Herbs

Testifying on Bill Number: Senate Bill 59

Testimony: Verbal Written Both

Testifying As: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Are you a Registered Lobbyist? Yes No

Special Requests: _____

To whom it may concern:

Chair-woman Roegner and honorable members of this committee, thank you for allowing me to email my testify in opposition to Senate Bill 59. My name is Jess Laurello and I am the owner of Italian Herbs Dispensary, an independent dispensary located in Ashtabula, Ohio.

There are 3 main points I will focus on, listed below, for clarity before my testimony.

1. Taxes being increased and taken away from the local municipalities
2. Potency cap of 100mg
3. Separate storage for Adult Use and Medical marijuana

I have grown up in Ashtabula County and am very familiar with our local economic situation. The proposed tax increase is something that will dramatically affect the safe access of cannabis for the people of my county.

Our area has been hit hard by the opioid crisis and having a safe place to buy cannabis is essential to ensuring we put an end to Ohioans dying from buying laced product from the black market. I know this analogy may seem extreme, but these are real stories we hear in our dispensary every day. We have had customers and patients tell us if we had existed years ago maybe their daughter/son/brother/sister/etc. would still be alive because they died from fentanyl laced cannabis purchased on the street.

If the taxes on cannabis go up, we are leaning into a situation where the people of Ohio will not be able to afford to purchase safely in a program created to simply allow that. In addition, taking away any tax benefit from local municipalities is unfair considering they are directly taking the risk associated with having a primarily cash business in their community.

Regarding the Potency cap of 100mg, I would ask you consider our veterans, the terminally ill and those with disabilities. Many do not feel comfortable obtaining a medical card or do not have the funds to cover the cost. They require higher dose items as part of their care plan and by limiting potency we are again encouraging customers to purchase elsewhere (neighboring states, black market).

Lastly, the separation of Adult-Use and Medical storage is something that should be left to the operator to organize and decide what makes the most sense. I invite you to come visit my dispensary and I am happy to show you how our POS system already does a great job of separating inventory and ensures we will not sell the wrong thing to the wrong customer type (AU/Medical).

We are a small business who cares about operating correctly under the rules set forth by the Department of Commerce and the Board of Pharmacy. We are responsible for operating our business correctly, it is our livelihood. So as a result, I believe we can handle the process of organizing and storing our inventory. I appreciate committee taking the time to review my testimony and am available via call or email to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Jess Laurello

Owner of Italian Herbs Dispensary