

Testimony Opposed to Senate Bill 56- Revise Marijuana Laws. Feb 18, 2025

The Deception Behind SB 56 – Who Do You Think You’re Fooling?

Chair Roegner and Members of the Committee

Let’s get straight to it: Someone thinks you are stupid.

The secrecy, the speed, the lack of transparency in pushing Senate Bill 56 through without inviting a single opponent to the initial hearing—it reeks of influence from large, out-of-state Level I cultivators who want to hoard Ohio’s cannabis industry for themselves. This is a blatant money grab by those who see profits over people, by those who would rather gut the competition than foster fair market participation.

You were elected to represent Ohioans, not corporate interests. And yet, SB 56 is being shoved through like voters can’t read for themselves. This bill makes massive changes, slipping them under the guise of protecting children, something we all support—but using that as cover to strip away what Ohio voters explicitly approved. That’s a deception at its finest.

Ohio voters passed a general measure to allow for recreational cannabis. Some of you may not personally support cannabis use, and you may have heard the usual negative rhetoric. You may be inclined to think that adding more restrictions through SB 56 is the responsible thing to do. But do you actually know how much has been stripped from what voters agreed to?

Take a hard look at the bill:

- **Eliminates Level III adult-use cultivator licenses.** Just like that—dismissed as unimportant with a flagrant stroke of the pen.
- **Eliminates the Cannabis Social Equity and Jobs Program.** This program was designed to provide financial assistance and license application support to those most affected by marijuana prohibition. Now? Gone.
- **Combines adult-use and medical marijuana licenses.** Sounds efficient, but in reality, it places undue burdens on existing medical licenses who may not be prepared for adult-use operations.
- **Eliminates the authority of the DCC to approve new forms of adult-use cannabis.** The DCC still gets to approve new forms of medical marijuana, but adult-use? Shut down. Why? Who benefits from this restriction?
- **Redirects tax revenues.** The 2023 proposal had funds going toward mental health programs like the 9-8-8 Suicide Hotline. SB 56? Redirects it all to GRF funds—ignoring what voters actually wanted.

- **Modifies eligibility criteria for licensure.** Translation: It tightens control, further restricting access to new business owners.

Now, let's talk about something that was overheard in the Statehouse halls: A staffer saying, "Why are we wasting time on all this DEI bullshit? Just cross it out, nobody cares."

Is that what happened here? Was Level III licensing conflated with DEI and simply discarded? Do you think voters would agree with that? The public needs to know if Level III was erased out of misplaced spite, ignorance, or worse—because the industry giants wanted it gone.

And let's be clear: We are not asking for unrestricted expansion. We are asking for fairness. Level III licenses represent small, passionate craft growers-- the innovators. One's that care about the environment, and greater opportunities. If Level I growers are like large-scale commercial wineries producing bulk table wine, while Level III growers are like boutique vineyards handcrafting unique, high-quality vintages for wine enthusiasts. We want to provide quality cannabis, *and* competition. Now, they're being wiped out before they even have a chance.

The loss of Level III licenses means consumers will be left with only mass-market, corporate cannabis—the equivalent of drinking the same generic wine at every bar, in every town, forever.

Senator Bill DeMora put it best: "SB 56 generally flies in the face of voters, who ratified the recreational program's details via the ballot box." You are pushing forward a bill that does not reflect the will of the people.

Ohio had the chance to increase its standards. Instead, this bill ensures that the industry remains in the hands of a few corporate players, stripping out competition, innovation, and opportunity. We urge you to not only read the bill entirely, **but revise this bill, restore Level III licensing**, and ensure that cannabis policy in Ohio reflects what voters actually approved—not what special interests have lobbied for behind closed doors.

Sincerely,  
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