

Opponent Testimony on Ohio SB 56

Presented by: James Powers - JustAVeteran.com

Date: 02/18/2025

Before the: Ohio Senate Committee on General Government

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 56. I am a Stark County resident, veteran, a national advocate for alternative therapies, and a certified cannabis product specialist with extensive experience in cannabis policy, patient advocacy, and market regulation. I have worked closely with industry experts, policymakers, and grassroots organizations to ensure that cannabis laws are both effective and aligned with voter intent.

Beyond my professional expertise, my perspective is also shaped by personal experience. I grew up in an environment where cannabis prohibition directly impacted my family, culminating in my father's 2016 arrest for cultivating cannabis in Akron. This case highlights the real consequences of misguided drug policies and the persistent failures of prohibitionist approaches ([Cleveland.com, 2016](#)).

My military service and advocacy work provide a unique lens through which to assess SB 56. I understand both the public safety concerns cited by proponents and the realities of cannabis regulation. This bill, however, does not strengthen oversight or consumer protection; instead, it imposes unnecessary restrictions that push consumers back to illicit markets, making enforcement more difficult and undermining the very goals of legalization.

SB 56 Contradicts the Will of Ohio Voters

- **Disregard for Voter Intent:** Ohioans made a clear decision when they passed adult-use cannabis legislation, supporting a regulated framework that balances accessibility with oversight. SB 56 rewrites this framework with excessive restrictions that were neither proposed nor endorsed by voters, undermining the democratic process (Ballotpedia, 2023).
- **A Dangerous Legislative Precedent:** Overriding voter-approved policies with restrictive measures discourages civic engagement and weakens trust in our electoral system. The legislature should be working to implement and refine what voters approved, not dismantling it.

SB 56 is a Solution in Search of a Problem

- **Claim of Government Efficiency is Misleading:** Senator Huffman suggests that merging Ohio's medical and adult-use programs will cut bureaucracy, but there is no evidence that existing structures are inefficient. Many medical patients worry that

consolidation will dilute their rights and access to the medicine they rely on ([Ohio Medical Marijuana Control Program, 2024](#)).

- **No Justification for Additional Restrictions:** Public safety concerns like impaired driving and underage access are already addressed in existing law. The additional restrictions in SB 56 do not enhance safety but rather create unnecessary hurdles for responsible consumers and businesses ([NORML, 2023](#)).

Unfounded Claims Regarding Child Safety

- **No Evidence of Increased Youth Use:** Proponents claim that marijuana products attract children, yet data from states with legal cannabis markets show no significant increase in youth consumption post-legalization ([JAMA Pediatrics, 2022](#)). Current regulations already prohibit marketing to minors, making these additional restrictions unnecessary.
- **Existing Safeguards Are Sufficient:** Ohio law already mandates child-resistant packaging and marketing restrictions on cannabis products, similar to alcohol and tobacco ([Ohio Cannabis Control Division, 2023](#)).

Unnecessary THC Restrictions Lack Scientific Basis

- **Arbitrary THC Caps:** SB 56 proposes capping THC levels at **35% for flower and 70% for concentrates**, despite no scientific evidence supporting these limits as necessary for public health or safety. The Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission, for example, found insufficient evidence to justify THC concentration caps, warning against policy decisions based on assumption rather than data ([Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission, 2021](#)).
- **Consumer Demand and the Illicit Market:** States that have imposed arbitrary potency caps have not seen reductions in problematic use but have instead driven consumers to unregulated markets, where product quality and safety are compromised ([USC Schaeffer Center for Health Policy, 2023](#)).

Refuting the Need for New Transport Laws

- **Cannabis Transport Already Regulated:** SB 56 introduces unnecessary restrictions on transporting cannabis, even though Ohio law already prohibits impaired driving and mandates proper storage in vehicles ([Ohio Revised Code, 2023](#)). There is no data showing an increase in cannabis-related DUI incidents due to legal marijuana.

Reduction in Home Cultivation Limits is Unjustified

- **Unfair Restrictions on Personal Freedom:** Reducing the allowable number of home-grown plants from **12 to 6** unnecessarily restricts the rights of responsible adults to cultivate cannabis for personal use.

- **No Evidence of Increased Black Market Activity:** Proponents claim home growing will fuel a black market, yet data from states like Colorado and California show that reasonable home cultivation laws do not increase illicit sales ([Colorado Department of Revenue, 2023](#)).

References

1. Cleveland.com. "51 Pot Plants Seized from Akron Home." March 2016. https://www.cleveland.com/akron/2016/03/51_pot_plants_seized_from_akro.html
2. Ballotpedia. "Ohio Marijuana Legalization Initiative (2023)." [https://ballotpedia.org/Ohio_Marijuana_Legalization_Initiative_\(2023\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Ohio_Marijuana_Legalization_Initiative_(2023))
3. Ohio Medical Marijuana Control Program. "Medical Marijuana in Ohio." 2024. <https://www.medicalmarijuana.ohio.gov/>
4. NORML. "Ohio Marijuana Laws." 2023. <https://norml.org/laws/ohio-marijuana-laws/>
5. Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission. "High THC Cannabis and Effects on the Human Body." 2021. <https://masscannabiscontrol.com/document/high-tetrahydrocannabinol-thc-cannabis-and-effects-on-the-human-body-more-research-needed-october-2021>
6. USC Schaeffer Center for Health Policy. "Federal Regulations of Cannabis for Public Health in the U.S." 2023. <https://healthpolicy.usc.edu/research/federal-regulations-of-cannabis-for-public-health-in-the-u-s>
7. Ohio Revised Code. "Cannabis Transport Regulations." 2023. <https://codes.ohio.gov/>
8. Colorado Department of Revenue. "Marijuana Enforcement Division." 2023. <https://sbq.colorado.gov/marijuana-enforcement>