

Good day,

My name is Seth Lipocky from Akron, Ohio. Today, I am proud of my state and its citizens for the phenomenal start of Ohio's recreational program that started in 2024. Ohio had one of the best starts out of the seventeen states that decriminalized cannabis. Unfortunately, we have elected officials that don't see it that way and want to limit our freedom of using the plant for our own personal use.

Ohio is rated the number one stressful state in the United States of America. Since marijuana has become legal since December 2023, many citizens have been more relaxed and mentally positive, creating a better environment and image for Ohio. My hometown of Akron is the methamphetamine capital of the world. The state also has a serious heroin and opioid problem. States that have legalized marijuana (with the exception of Oregon who wrongfully decriminalized everything) have seen a drastic drop in hard drug use in their communities.

Dispensaries have provided a welcoming atmosphere and are friendly to every customer who seeks to purchase a cannabis product of any kind. Much different from Michigan who will lock down the waiting room and have a police officer on duty watching over you, which makes customers uncomfortable. It should also be noted Ohio has not had any major issues whatsoever since legalization began. With no problems to be concerned about, why would you completely change the policy?

It seems as though we have elected officials still upset the bill passed in the first place, when they should be taking advantage of a great opportunity to help build and improve the state. In my line of work, I meet people from all over the world. I have had many conversations with folks from Colorado, one of the first two states to have recreational marijuana in the US. They have told me the tax money from the program has drastically changed cities like Denver for the better. The streets and buildings have all been remade. The city has more citizens living in it than ever before. Money continues to pour in and their state government continues to take

advantage of the extra funds by improving Colorado at all cost. That should be the goal for Ohio as well.

Passing SB56 would do more harm than good for Ohio. First off, the citizens voted for legalization and everything promised with it. It would be un-American and against the Republican standard to change anything the people voted for unless there were serious consequences from it, and there have been no negatives thus far. Second, you are denying the chance to add billions of tax dollars the state could utilize for the better. This would help fund better education, police programs, better roads, building maintenance, and improve mental health facilities. That's just scratching the surface of all the possibilities.

The SB56 proposal and Governor Mike DeWine's higher tax proposal would back-fire immediately. Consumers would search for a reliable source in the streets in Ohio. Some would seek purchasing their products from Michigan and Pennsylvania's new recreational program. Michigan stressed a few years ago that Ohio's legalization would make their state lose millions of tax revenue in their program. Why would you help the competition when you could beat them?

I would like to encourage our representatives to look at a few things regarding our recreational and medical programs here in Ohio. Embrace the proposal for higher THC products, pre-rolls, and more affordable pricing. Other states have the higher THC content and have had no issues. Marijuana does not kill anyone who uses it and is safer than all prescribed drugs. Some people need the higher THC levels for pain and health reasons. More affordable product would bring more money to the state. Look at corporations such as Walmart, Target, Dollar General, and even gyms like Planet Fitness. They provide a product the community is seeking with an affordable price. They make millions of dollars from the public and as a result they have stores just about everywhere. You either take advantage of the consumer or they will buy somewhere else. Doesn't make sense to let billions of dollars of easy money to walk away.

If SB56 were to pass, you would have serious trust issues between state representatives and the voters. Coalition to Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol gave a voice and a bill that voters were seeking and it passed. Adding more limitations for no good reason will not sit well with our society today. From the very beginning, there was no good reason that marijuana was made illegal in America. It gives many health and mental benefits for anyone who uses it. The tide has turned and much of this country is starting to realize the positive impact it truly has on our communities. Former Governor of New Jersey, Chris Christie, is as far right as it gets. He strongly opposed legalization when he ran for President in 2016. Since then, New Jersey has voted and passed recreational law. Christie saw the impact it made on New Jersey and turned a new leaf. He told President Donald Trump this past December that he should pass the bill to move cannabis to a schedule III drug, a conversation that had been happening between the FDA and the Biden administration since May 2024.

Please consider my testimony and the information that is provided with it. Through Ohio's cannabis programs we can help rebuild the state, create jobs, improve health, and make lots of money in the process. As long as it's done properly, the opportunities can be limitless.