

## Testimony of Mike Gatlin

Before the Ohio Senate General Government Committee

March 19, 2025

Chair Roegner and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you and share my support for Senate Bill 86. My name is Mike Getlin, and I am the Chief Public Affairs Officer for Nectar, a multistate cannabis company with five retail stores in Ohio. For the last eight years I have worked extensively on regulatory and legislative issues related to cannabis and hemp across the nation and have worked on a number of attempts to regulate hemp-derived THC which have seen varying levels of success. Through that lens, I am confident that while there may be some tweaks that could improve it, this bill does accomplish its critical goals.

SB86 follows a path similar to that we took in my home state of Oregon, where legislators took decisive action to rein in the unregulated hemp THC market. The results there have been good—ensuring consumer safety, preventing underage access, and protecting the integrity of the state’s regulated cannabis industry. Ohio is right to take a similar approach. Importantly, Oregon companies with significant hemp product lines not only survived but thrived in the regulatory environment that was created by a bill similar to 86.

I would, however, encourage the committee to consider a couple of additional concerns. It is important to understand that Delta 9 THC is the main intoxicating component of marijuana. Simply because it is derived from hemp does not mean its less intoxicating. As such, allowing unlimited amounts of hemp Delta 9 THC to be sold at our adult-use stores could create direct competition for the state’s licensed adult use growers, who may be unable to match the lower production cost associated with hemp cultivation and processing.

Most importantly, I urge extreme caution in the roll out of low-dose THC beverages. There is an argument that these products, when properly regulated, could have a place in the market. However, they must be introduced slowly and very carefully. Numerous studies show that combining THC and alcohol significantly amplifies impairment. A 2022 study published in Clinical Chemistry found that even low doses of THC, when consumed alongside alcohol, led to disproportionately high intoxication levels compared to either substance alone. Research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse reinforces this concern, showing that alcohol increases THC absorption, leading to stronger and less predictable effects.

This creates a real risk in social drinking settings. A consumer at a bar who has had a couple of beers and then drinks a 2mg THC beverage may be caught off guard by the combined effect. What might seem like a mild dose on its own can lead to significantly increased intoxication when mixed with alcohol. This is an area where Ohio should tread carefully, ensuring clear labeling, education, bartender training, and most importantly, lower dosing.

A single 4mg beverage, especially for someone who has been drinking alcohol, could be extremely intoxicating. If we're going to allow this market to develop, let's do so slowly and give people a chance to experience lower doses first, perhaps no more than 2mg per drink and no more than 1/4mg per ounce of liquid. Most adults know how a glass of wine will affect them and can make responsible decisions based on that knowledge and experience – knowledge and experience that many will lack when it comes to THC drinks at the local watering hole.

Finally, there's plenty of naturally occurring THC in the market. There is absolutely no need for designer drug synthetics. They only serve one purpose, which is to mimic natural THC. Like bath salts, and any number of previous concoctions, we know little about the long term health effects of these compounds, and I do not think Ohio should put itself out as the proving ground. All synthetically derived THC should be banned so that regulators are not constantly trying to determine the safety of new chemicals that the FDA won't even study.

With these small amendments, SB 86 represents a good step forward in addressing the unregulated sale of hemp-derived THC products in Ohio. The current federal loophole that has created an intoxicating hemp free-for-all across the nation has left this critical work in your hands. Thank you for doing it. I would especially like to thank Senator Huffman for his leadership on this issue and cannabis in general over the last year. Though we certainly do not agree on all things marijuana, I appreciate his honest and thoughtful approach and extensive work to make this market as safe as it can be for Ohioans.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Mike Getlin

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Nectar