



**Proponent Testimony SB 86
Senate General Government Committee
Catholic Conference of Ohio
March 18th, 2025**

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear, and members of the Senate General Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony today. My name is Will Kuehnle, and I am an associate director with the Catholic Conference of Ohio. The Catholic Conference is the official voice of the Catholic Church in Ohio on matters of public policy, and we are pleased to support Senate Bill 86 to regulate and tax intoxicating hemp and drinkable cannabinoid products.

The role of government is to safeguard the common good by ensuring public safety, protecting the vulnerable from exploitation, and utilizing the mechanism of taxation to encourage actions that promote and discourage actions that harm human flourishing. The rapid spread of unregulated intoxicating hemp products represents a serious threat not just to public safety but to the moral fabric of our state. These products, chemically altered to maximize intoxication, are marketed in ways that confuse consumers, evade regulatory oversight, and, most alarmingly, end up in the hands of minors.

By setting clear guidelines on permitted THC levels and requiring rigorous testing, labeling, and advertising standards, SB 86 ensures that consumers are informed, products are accurately represented, and minors are protected. The legislation imposes significant penalties for those who violate these regulations, including felony charges for selling intoxicating hemp products to individuals under 21, demonstrating public resolve to protect the most vulnerable from harm.

Part of the witness of the Catholic Church today is the call to reform our social order when it prioritizes profit over human dignity and consumption over responsibility. The unregulated sale of synthetic intoxicants is a clear example of this disorder, in which businesses exploit legal loopholes at the expense of the well-being of the public, especially the young. Additionally, SB 86's tax provisions—including a 15% gross receipts tax on intoxicating hemp sales and a \$3.50 per gallon excise tax on drinkable cannabinoid products—ensure that Ohio can properly fund regulatory enforcement and public health initiatives already strained by the consequences of cannabis use.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony. I am happy to answer any questions.