

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear and all members of the Senate General Government Committee, my name is JJ Coombs, CEO of Alpha Brands, Arvida Labs, and Mellow Fellow. I hold a Doctorate in Pharmaceutical Sciences (PharmD), and I have extensive experience in the hemp industry, including product formulation, manufacturing, and ensuring compliance with rigorous health and safety standards.

Throughout my career, I have collaborated closely with state and federal regulators, policymakers, and industry leaders to advocate for sensible and effective regulations. The 2018 Farm Bill, which federally legalized hemp production, opened significant opportunities for American entrepreneurs and created a burgeoning market for innovative products, while simultaneously promoting economic growth and public safety.

I typically advocate for minimal taxation and regulation; however, in this instance, I am advocating for clear, sensible regulation. Ohio businesses in the hemp industry require precise guidelines to ensure compliance and promote legitimate operations, ultimately protecting consumers and fostering economic stability.

Senate Bill 86 raises significant concerns for our industry. If passed, it would negatively impact thousands of small Ohio businesses, inadvertently strengthening illicit market actors who exploit regulatory gaps and threaten consumer safety. This bill, in its current form, does not eliminate consumer demand—it merely pushes it towards unregulated channels.

In Ohio alone, the hemp-derived cannabinoid industry contributes roughly \$704 million annually to the economy, employs over 8,000 people, provides approximately \$327 million in wages, and generates more than \$40 million in sales tax revenue.

At Alpha Brands, Arvida Labs, and Mellow Fellow, we adhere to the highest standards of safety and transparency. We implement rigorous practices, including thorough batch testing, comprehensive full-panel testing, meticulous chain-of-custody procedures, and complete product traceability from farm to final sale. These best practices protect consumers, uphold industry integrity, and support regulatory compliance.

We advocate for regulations that specifically target bad actors without harming legitimate Ohio businesses. Sensible, targeted legislation can effectively address industry issues, enhance consumer safety, and eliminate harmful practices without devastating economic impacts.

In Virginia, overly restrictive laws decimated the legal industry overnight, inadvertently fueling black-market operations. Conversely, states like Tennessee, Georgia and North Carolina have opted for thoughtful, balanced regulatory frameworks that protect consumers and legitimate businesses alike, which could serve as beneficial models for Ohio.

We respectfully request that this committee carefully consider the economic and safety implications of SB 86. We are eager to partner with you to craft sensible regulations that protect Ohio consumers, support responsible business practices, and ensure the sustainable growth of this important, federally legal industry.

Thank you again for this opportunity. I am available for any questions or further discussion.