March 24, 2026

Before the Ohio Senate General Government Committee

Proponent Testimony Senate Bill 299

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear, Jr., and Members of the Committee, my name is Walker Gallman and I am the Legislative Director for the Global Kratom Coalition (GKC), an alliance of consumers, scientific experts, and industry leaders seeking to enact regulations to ensure consumers have access to safe and regulated natural leaf kratom products. Our mission is to advance scientific research, encourage consumer education, and serve as a resource for key stakeholders and decision makers in legislative and regulatory matters.

The GKC supports strong regulations for natural kratom leaf, including labeling requirements, prohibitions on synthetic products, limits on 7-hydroxymitragynine content, restrictions on marketing to children, manufacturing standards, and the creation of a kratom product registry. We respectfully oppose blanket bans that include natural leaf kratom. This balanced approach is supported by leading kratom scientists in the U.S., and is aligned with the regulations put forward in SB 299.

Today, I'm providing testimony in support of SB 299, which would create a regulatory and enforcement framework that ensures kratom products are unadulterated and safe for consumers. This legislation provides a balanced solution that safeguards consumer safety while allowing responsible adults to continue accessing safe, natural kratom products. The current lack of regulation increases the risks of consumers acquiring adulterated, poorly labeled products and encourages the proliferation of bad actors in the market. SB 299 offers a better solution by establishing a regulatory framework that ensures kratom products are safe, natural, age-gated and transparent. Regulation allows for responsible adult use while protecting consumers from adulterated and mislabeled products.

Kratom is a tropical evergreen tree (Mitragyna speciosa) native to Southeast Asia, where for centuries, it has been used for its functional benefits (energy and focus). Additionally, natural kratom leaf has been consumed in the U.S. for approximately 50 years and was introduced to the U.S. by soldiers returning from the Vietnam War. Today, natural leaf kratom products are used by 23.9 million Americans.

These products are traditionally consumed in various forms, such as dried powders, fresh leaves, or brewed teas/decoctions. Importantly, natural kratom leaf is not intoxicating, does not get you high, and does not cause impairment. For the majority of its existence in the U.S., leaf kratom was the only type of kratom available. However, in more recent years, we've seen the addition of concentrated synthetic 7-OH products which are falsely marketed as natural kratom.

As the science on natural kratom has advanced, it has become overwhelmingly clear consumers should not be prevented from accessing this natural botanical. There have been 18 clinical studies conducted on kratom in addition to hundreds of non-clinical studies. Of particular note is FDA's own clinical study which confirmed natural leaf kratom is well tolerated in humans, even at large doses. The FDA, the DEA and the WHO have all reviewed natural kratom and have concurred that natural kratom leaf does not meet any the 8 factors required for scheduling a substance.

Currently, the Ohio Board of Pharmacy has promulgated rules to schedule both kratom and its synthetic variants. However, while we are supportive of the rule that would ban synthetics, the decision to promulgate a rule to schedule natural kratom is unnecessary and goes against the currently available science and the actions of the Federal Government.

However, we need to also acknowledge that 'not all kratom is equal - and in fact 'not all products that call themselves kratom actually are'. Due to the current absence of clear regulations, dangerous concentrated synthetic opioid products, like concentrated 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH) opioid products, are now masquerading as natural kratom while marketing themselves as drugs. Concentrated synthetic 7-OH products bear absolutely no resemblance to the natural leaf kratom products that are used by millions of Americans.

For context, natural 7-OH is an oxidative byproduct compound found in trace amounts in dried kratom leaf. However, concentrated synthetic 7OH products contain more than 100 times more synthetically created 7OH than what is found in natural kratom leaf, the result of which is a product that is 13 times more potent than morphine.

That being said, I want to address an argument being advanced by concentrated synthetic 7-OH product manufacturers — the claim that kratom should be prohibited from sale in convenience stores and gas stations. This argument deserves scrutiny, because it is not grounded in consumer protection. It is grounded in competitive self-interest.

As Ohio has seen first hand, concentrated synthetic 7-OH products are found widely at smoke shops and vape stores across the state. pThese are the very same retailers who carry the 7-OH manufacturers' products. It is no coincidence that those manufacturers now want to restrict natural kratom from the convenience store channel — a channel where their high-potency synthetic products have limited presence, and age-gating at the point of purchase is a normal course of business due to alcohol and nicotine sales. Secondly, these channels are more circumspect in terms of the products they carry, requiring good quality products to be sold in their stores - hence why synthetic 7OH products are not often found in these stores. h. We should not push natural kratom into the shadows due to these concentrated synthetic 7OH manufacturer's admission that their products specifically should not be widely available.Pushing sales to smoke shops and online only This is market protection dressed up as public health policy, and this Committee should recognize it as such.

The real question before this body is not *where* kratom is sold, but *how* it is regulated at the point of sale. On that question, the evidence actually cuts against the concentrated synthetic 7-OH industry's argument.

Another point I'd like to raise is in reference to the House hearing in which arguments were made regarding labeling. Specifically, the concern that was raised was that the kratom product in question said "not for human consumption" on the label. However, what this individual didn't understand is that this is how the state of Ohio Department of Agriculture currently requires you to label a kratom product. This particular instance illustrates why it's important to update labeling requirements to no longer require that and instead provide instructions for use. This change will provide additional clarity for consumers and help ensure products are safely consumed as intended.

In closing, the GKC urges Ohio lawmakers to pass SB 299. By supporting this legislation, Ohio can protect consumers, promote product transparency, and maintain responsible access to kratom for those who benefit from it. This is a balanced solution that ensures the safety and well-being of Ohio residents while fostering a safe, regulated kratom marketplace.

Sincerely,

Walker Gallman

Walker Gallman
Legislative Director
Global Kratom Coalition