

The logo for Prevention Action Alliance features the word "Prevention" in a blue serif font and "Action Alliance" in a green sans-serif font, with a thin green horizontal line above and below the text.

Prevention Action Alliance

House Bill 236

Ohio House Health Committee

Prevention Action Alliance

February 8, 2022

Good morning, Chairman Lipps, Vice-Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo and members of the House Health Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent written testimony on House Bill 236, a bill to regulate Kratom processing, sale and distribution. My name is Fran Gerbig, and I am the Executive Director of Prevention Action Alliance (PAA). PAA is a statewide nonprofit prevention agency based in Columbus, Ohio and has been in existence for over thirty years. Prevention Action Alliance is dedicated to leading healthy communities in the prevention of substance misuse and the promotion of mental health wellness. Our organization offers an abundance of resources, training services, grants and advocacy opportunities for those who are active in the prevention and mental health fields.

While Kratom isn't considered a controlled substance to most states nor the federal government, the use of kratom is not recommended by the FDA and the DEA has it listed as a drug of concern. Researchers who have studied kratom think its side effects and safety problems more than offset any potential benefits. Poison control centers in the United States received 1,800 reports involving the use of kratom from 2011 through 2017, including reports of death. Half of these exposures resulted in serious negative outcomes such as seizures and high blood pressure. Five of the seven infants who were reported to have been exposed to kratom went through withdrawal.¹

¹ "Kratom: Unsafe and Ineffective." *Mayo Clinic*, Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 28 Jan. 2022, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/consumer-health/in-depth/kratom/art-20402171>.

Nationally it is estimated that 10.9 million users of drugs other than alcohol reported they were using these substances “a little more or much more” than they did before the COVID-19 pandemic began². At a time when Ohio families are grappling with unprecedented addiction compounded by the stress of a global pandemic, we consider the commercialization of an addictive drug with such scientifically proven public health harms to be unacceptable.

Under this bill, the regulation, sale, and distribution of Kratom fails to highlight the negative risks to a person’s mental and physical health that have been documented and include nausea, seizures, hallucinations, and other psychotic symptoms. Some users have reported becoming addicted to Kratom. At this time, there are no specific medical treatments or behavioral therapies for kratom addiction. Scientists need more research to determine effective treatment options.

Thank you again for allowing me to provide written testimony. If there are any questions, I would be happy to answer them via phone or email.

² “Samhsa Releases 2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health.” *SAMHSA*, 26 Oct. 2021, <https://www.samhsa.gov/newsroom/press-announcements/202110260320>.