

JEFFERY S. REZABEK

CRIMINAL JUSTICE - VICE CHAIR

CIVIL JUSTICE

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL
DEVELOPMENT

CRIMINAL SENTENCING COMMISSION



Ohio General Assembly
House of Representatives

J. KYLE KOEHLER

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House Bill 73 Sponsor Testimony

Chair Huffman, Vice-Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for giving myself and Representative Koehler the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 73. If signed into law, House Bill 73 will require the purchaser of any over-the-counter product containing the drug dextromethorphan to be 18 years of age or older.

This bill is a reintroduction of HB 197 from the 131st General Assembly which passed out of this committee unanimously and out of the House 92-2. It serves as the next step in a long line of efforts this General Assembly and previous ones have undertaken to battle the drug epidemic that is crippling our state. This drug, dex, serves as the main ingredient in many cough syrups and cold medications.

When approached about pursuing this legislation, I instantly thought of a client of mine. As a juvenile defense attorney, I often serve as the legal adviser for those who do not understand the process or truly need guidance. This client, whom I represent in Drug Court in Montgomery County, served as the first example of how something so simple as Robitussin, when put into the wrong hands, can be abused.

My client would mix Robitussin with beer and it would create some sort of hallucinogenic response. She is just one of many of our youths statewide who engage in a sort of "robo-trip." Dex is a safe and effective ingredient that is used in cough and cold medicines, but consuming 25-50 times the recommended dosage, these types of medicines can cause the type of feeling that our youths are seeking.

As a legislative body, we have made many efforts to battle back against the drug epidemic. When we shut down pill mills and make pseudoephedrine more difficult to obtain, individuals who are dependent on substances will find the next alternative that attains the hallucinogenic feeling that they seek. Again, this is where something as simple as cough syrup comes into play because it is easily attainable.

House Bill 73 is a common sense piece of legislation. Right now, if you were to go to any of the major retailers and attempted to purchase any product containing dex, you would be required to show your ID to the clerk. Unfortunately, if you were to purchase this same type of medicine in a local convenience store or gas station, you would not be required to prove you are of age to purchase this product. This bill would attempt to close that loop hole and serve as the next step in our ongoing battle against drug abuse in our state.

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In closing, twelve other states around the country have passed legislation similar, if not the same, to House Bill 73. The intent of this bill is to make it as difficult as possible for medicines from making their way into the wrong hands and ultimately being abused. I want to thank you for your time and your attention to this manner. Representative Rezabek and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.