

Good morning, Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Congresswoman Sweeney, members of the House Finance Committee and guests.

My name is Karen Jaynes, I am a resident in Representative Sweeney's 16<sup>th</sup> District, and I voted Yes on the Voter's Initiative 2 on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, as a proponent of Ohio Adult 21 Cannabis Regulation. Thank you for the opportunity to be heard on this very important and historical occasion for the State of Ohio and our country.

For all purposes of my testimony today I will be using the scientific term, Cannabis to refer to the plant Cannabis Sativa L.

Marijuana is considered a pejorative term for cannabis used to demonize immigrant people who used cannabis culturally in our country in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As we look at these regulations today, language matters.

I come before you, the finance committee as a concerned citizen, an Ohio medical cannabis patient, a mother of two young adult children, a mindfulness, meditation and embodiment teaching professional for almost two decades, and a Cannabis Specialist with a Master of Science Degree in Cannabis Science & Therapeutics from the University of Maryland-Baltimore. I am considered one of the leading educated cannabis specific experts in cannabis science, policy, therapeutics and advocacy in the country.

I am a member of Americans for Safe Access, the largest national cannabis patient advocacy organization in the US, and a voting member of the American Society for Testing & Materials (ASTM), a global, multi-industry professional standards and compliance organization. I am a member of the ASTM's D37 Subcommittee on Cannabis. Here we focus on writing industry standards with a focus on safety, compliance and testing using current and evidence-based science approaches to setting standards. One of the biggest successes for ASTM and its members this year was passing the universal identifier of Intoxicating Cannabinoids content symbol <https://sn.astm.org/features/symbol-cannabis-industry-.html>.

I was also an advisor to a national federal regulatory non-profit organization over the past 18 months for which the last month I held the position of President. I have informed the recent Federal, Bi-Cameral Request for Information on CBD, I have presented at the 2023 Cannabis Symposium held by the Food & Drug Law Institute on Improving Patient Care and Research. I have also presented in Boston for a Cannabis Educational Forum on State and Federal Regulations. My Graduate White Paper entitled "*Creating Comprehensive, Informed Cannabis Legislation: A Conversation between Industry and the FDA*", <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LGsG5znsn4X5nUDOzmTZmDldmxQfzaqI/view> received academic and industry accolades. Over my graduate course work, I was selected to present my poster on D8 and intoxicating cannabinoids at the Cannabis Science Conference East in Baltimore.

I feel that I am an informed voter and educated participant in the Cannabis Industry. And I continue to learn every day in this wildly dynamic space that is humbling.

Today, I am here to advocate for the Spirit of the Statute that passed with over 2 million voices in a 57% majority. That its tax revenue integrity is honored, reduction of cannabis criminality ensues and social equity is not overlooked.

The Voters Initiative enacted the provision of 5 funds to be established in the State Treasury, one each for a primary adult use tax fund that pays revenue in designated percentages to the cannabis social equity and jobs fund (36%), the host community cannabis fund (36%), the substance abuse and addiction fund (25%) and the division of cannabis control and tax commissioner fund (3%).

These funds were to receive the 10% tax revenue collected from the adult use sales. Over the last week, discussions to increase the tax revenue to 15% have surfaced. It is my strong belief that increasing the Tax Revenue rate to 15% will be the demise of the program before it begins. With bordering states collecting a lesser tax rate on adult regulated products, consumers will find ways to spend their cannabis revenue there. Ohio's tax revenue at 10% keeps the tax revenue in Ohio and tempers the illicit market.

It is the voters will that these funds and revenue streams are maintained. It was with great and intentional purpose that the voters elected to fund social equity opportunity in Ohio. For far too long, communities of color have been disproportionately impacted by The War on Drugs. The War on Drugs was raged against cannabis in the late 60's and early 70's, during a time when youth culture spoke out through peaceful protests and music festivals against an unpopular war and an even more unpopular President. These policies were enforced disproportionately in black and brown communities. The Americans Civil Liberties Union reports that black men are 3.73 times more likely than their white counterparts to be arrested for cannabis while consuming at the same rate. In a minority community, those statistics become devastating and create deep pockets of generational poverty, insecurity and trauma. Giving back to these communities just over a third of the total revenue for education, training and access to market participation was an intentional will of this statute.

Suggestions on creating a fund for more policing and jails goes AGAINST the will of the initiative to reduce criminality. I was glad to see training for peace officers and troopers in the opening sections of the Bill. I have included today with my testimony a copy of the most recent international research on cannabis and driving, authored by The International Council on Alcohol, Drugs and Traffic Safety <https://www.icadtsinternational.com/Fact-Sheets>. Experts agree with certainty that cannabis impairment is not detectable using methodologies that evidence alcohol toxicity. Experts are becoming more aware through the chemistry and pharmacology of cannabis, including the understanding of the endocannabinoid system, that impairment is uniquely individual. The levels of THC in one person's system may not equate with an impairment level when comparing levels to others or creating generalized limits. Method of administration, the consumer's frequency of use, and in what way cannabis is engaging with

that person's endocannabinoid system are all very relevant factors in determining impairment, not to mention the days it can take for cannabis to eliminate from the system because of its lipophilic nature and secondary metabolites when applicable. I therefore suggest that pursuing that knowledge, and the research needed, be included in the abuse and addiction fund.

The passing of adult 21 regulated cannabis in Ohio was a huge success for me and 2 million other consumers and patients, to have the freedom "legally in their state", to consume responsibly, safe, state regulated products. I am celebrating 15 years alcohol free this year. I am extremely proud of that choice I made in my life. And in 2016, against my own bias and upbringing, cannabis became an unexpected and wonderful support for me in times of anxiety, sleeplessness, depression, pain and stress. I embrace the levels of joy it brings me in expanding my creativity, inner awareness and overall health. Research is just beginning to help us to understand all that cannabis can be as a medicine and over all well-being therapeutic. I am proud that Ohio has joined the majority of states that are leading with science and democratic process in cannabis.

Issue 2 begins to reduce stigma, engage education, embrace science and allow responsible consumption. And in that, Issue 2 seeks to recognize that people who have been jailed far too long for cannabis possession. Reducing criminality was always original intent and using tax revenue from this program to fund new jails for Ohio is not in the Statute approved by Ohioan Voters. I am strongly opposed to this addition or change.

And finally, let us reconsider the mandatory jail time and consider instead substance abuse assessment or public service opportunities. Incarcerating individuals away from their communities for non-violent offenses harms all communities and devastates generations of families. We are now only beginning to understand substance abuse and addiction as symptoms of trauma, and how incarceration only retraumatizes. Simple possession should never carry jail time.

In November 2022 a report was written for the Drug Enforcement and Policy Center at The Ohio State on lessons learned for states transitioning from a medical state to an adult regulated state ([From Medical to Recreational Marijuana: Lessons for States in Transition Report from November 2022 written by Jana Hrdinová, Dexter Ridgway](#)). I leave you with their first piece of advice, "Cultivate ongoing stakeholder engagement". Grow your knowledge base, get more people involved. Make it easier for people to share their constructive opinions and experiences, fears and visions.

We are all constituents; a part of something together. We are all the citizens living within the infrastructure of these regulations, willing experts to partner and grow together in shared vision. I appreciate your honesty, integrity and transparency. Thank you.