



Opponent Written Testimony- December 11, 2023
HB 354
Nicole Schiesler, President/CEO PreventionFIRST!

Chairman Jay Edwards, Vice-Chair Jeff LaRe, Ranking Member Bride Rose Sweeney and members of the Ohio House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written opponent testimony for House Bill 354 which aims to define and establish parameters to Issue 2.

My name is Nicole Schiesler. I am the President/CEO of PreventionFIRST! (PF!). I am also an Ohio Certified Prevention Consultant through the Ohio Chemical Dependency Professionals Board and a Master Certified Health Education Specialist through the National Commission for Health Education. PF! is a non-profit that has served the Greater Cincinnati area since 1996 with a focus on serving as a behavioral health prevention resource partner for youth, adults, and communities for substance use prevention, suicide prevention and mental health awareness.

PreventionFIRST! implements best practice strategies to reduce the risk of behavioral health disorders. Our vision is that all communities apply prevention strategies in every stage of life.

With that stated, our organization would like to highlight the significance of maintaining a substance use prevention and mental health promotion lens in regard to the elements outlined in HB 354 and the commercialization of legalized recreational marijuana. *PF!'s Student Survey* has shown consistently over the years that the age of first substance use is 13. The annual national survey tool, *Monitoring the Future*, continues to show each year as well, a similar age of first use at 14-years-old. The use of regular marijuana on an adolescent brain does not recover. Youth who start smoking heavily as teenagers and develop a diagnosis of a marijuana use disorder pose the risk of losing an average of eight IQ points between the ages of 13 and 38.

With the legalization of medical marijuana in Ohio alone, there was an increase in accidental marijuana poisonings among youth in the state. For example, Dayton Children's Hospital found that there was a 14-fold increase in accidental pediatric exposures to marijuana since the enactment of medical marijuana for children between the ages of 0-6 years old. Most of the children were hospitalized, with 14 percent admitted to the intensive care unit.

Minimizing or even eliminating the number of plants that Ohioans can grow will limit the dangerous exposure of the weed to youth and will diminish normalizing, in a home environment, the capability to grow your own drugs. The packaging of any product

sold in Ohio should be focused on not appealing to youth under the age of 21 and properly state the harms, content, poison control information, and source of the marijuana.

PreventionFIRST!, like its namesake, will continuously maintain the importance of prevention throughout the lifespan, but especially with youth. I applaud a portion of the tax from the commercialization of marijuana has been proposed for the Substance Abuse and Addiction Fund, however, given the extensive availability now of marijuana, in addition to other substances like alcohol and opioids, prevention has to be at the forefront of informing each generation of youth and their parents about the harms associated with abuse and potential addiction related to these substances. Ohio's prevention strength lies in its more than 90 coalitions and hundreds of prevention professionals who can assist with implementing behavioral health prevention strategies to youth, parents, schools and within communities. Prevention is just as much a part- if not the most important part- of the equation as treatment and recovery is with this new era in Ohio's history of legalized marijuana.

Thank you for this opportunity. Please reach out to me at 513-751-8000 or nschiesler@prevention-first.org.

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