

Hello good afternoon, everyone, my name is Yousef Zafer, I'm a senior majoring in cellular molecular neuroscience at THE Ohio State university, with the goal of becoming a pediatric neurosurgeon. I've been a medical marijuana patient since 2019 and have also worked in the industry for the past 2 years. As someone who's worked in the industry and studies receptor science and the inner workings of our endocannabinoid system, I think I can offer tremendous insight into patient's needs and where the Ohio medical marijuana program currently stands.

I'll admit I was skeptical about the therapeutic benefits until I was confronted with my own health crisis. I was suffering from a kidney disease which changed my life significantly, no more school, no more work, no more friends just survival mode. It required multiple surgeries, during which, the surgeons accidentally poked a hole in my lung. I still deal with the aftereffects to this day. While my kidney issue was thankfully resolved, I now have this chronic pain in my flank each time I breathe. The thing about chronic conditions is they don't go away, there's no cure. So long term chronic conditions need long term treatment, something you can do or take every day which is not going to cause a myriad of other issues. My initial treatment plan was to take opiates 3x/day which was debilitating on its own. The drug was so strong I once again couldn't drive, focus in school, etc. I felt worse off than before the surgeries,... I FELT IMPAIRED ALL THE TIME. Fast forward 6 months to when my pain management doctor saved my life. She suggested I try medical marijuana. One small gummy gave me more pain relief than 3 oxycodone's. And most importantly, I didn't feel impaired, I FELT EMPOWERED, to get my life back on track, get back into school and do all the things I used to enjoy doing. I represent the vast majority of the patient population in that we truly use this compound as a medicine. An

alternative to the harsh/hard drugs commonly prescribed. Which is why it's paramount to extend the list of qualifying conditions so that as many patients as possible have access to this alternative.

Now, when I go to the dispensary to purchase my medicine I'm looking for the highest quality products, specifically concentrates, which I don't need to inhale or vaporize, due to my lung condition. We have high quality products on the market, sure, but it's only a fraction of what could be offered, especially when compared to the medical products sold by our neighbors up north in Michigan. I know a lot of patient's who venture up to Michigan to purchase their medical products because they're cheaper and usually higher quality,...which is illegal. We need to keep Ohio patients in Ohio by offering those high-quality products at a competitive price.

And from the processor's perspective, I was a lab manager for almost 2 years, it's not easy to create those high-grade pharmaceutical products in the current framework. The lack of high-quality products on the market, compared to other medical markets, is directly related to lack of market competition. So, although the scientific community can agree full-spectrum products offer the greatest medicinal benefit, I see very few full spectrum products being offered. What I see is mostly distillate products which are easy to produce at scale and infuse into other products. It's not the best though, it's not the highest-quality grade medicine we can provide for our patients. We need to incentivize processors to produce more than just distillate, to innovate. We need a variety of high-grade products in our marketplace so our patients, who all have different needs, have multiple options to choose from.

Senate bill 9 isn't about expanding the medical marijuana control program but remediating it.

Ohio just hit over a billion dollars in medical marijuana sales, it's time to adjust policy to reflect the current marketplace. This bill will:

- Increase patient's access to their medicine by increasing the total number of dispensaries
- Increase the amount of biomass in METRC, which in turn decreases cost for the patient, and also to focus on product integrity so that patients have access to pharmaceutical grade meds
- Allow for more qualifying conditions to be added to the list which would provide patient's a viable alternative to traditional treatments, and also provides doctors with a more flexible treatment plan.
- It consolidates all regulation to one agency
- And lastly, it does away with high cost, unnecessary over-regulation which restricts innovation on the processor side, and prevents patients from receiving adequate education on their medication.