



**CARROLL COUNTY  
GENERAL HEALTH DISTRICT**  
Healthy People — Safe Communities

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SENATE BILL 9  
OPPONENT TESTIMONY  
State General Government Committee

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Chairman Rulli, Ranking Member DeMora and member of the Senate General Committee:

I thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today and share my opposition to Senate Bill 9 that significantly revises the medical marijuana laws in Ohio.

I am here as a county Health Commissioner, representing the people of rural and Appalachian communities across Ohio, but specifically the residents I serve in Carroll County. I am a Registered Nurse by training and have been a public health nurse for nearly 30 years. I am a strong advocate for population health and currently serve as the President-elect for the Ohio Public Health Association. My responsibility in both roles is to advocate for policies that promote health and well-being for Ohioans.

As a nurse and daughter to an 82-year-old elderly father, I have experienced my fair share of individuals suffering from chronic diseases and the pain they create. My own father has suffered from chronic pain for over 25 years, it affects his quality of life, my mothers and our extended family. He participates in the medical marijuana program in Ohio and it has given him some relief. He does so knowing his trusted physician and medical professionals are overseeing the products he chooses to help his pain. As a medical professional, health commissioner and daughter I too have trusted the medical marijuana program as it is currently administered, and I take its oversight very seriously.

I feel that the law as proposed threatens the health of Ohioans, please let me share with you how. First and foremost, the relaxed language and change in oversight will in my opinion increase marijuana access to our youth. Social access to marijuana and other substances is a large concern to the health of our children. In a survey conducted in our schools in 2019, we found that youth were most likely to obtain illegal substances by someone giving it to them or from sharing with family or friend, called social access to substances.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, research shows that parents in rural Appalachian communities do not perceive marijuana as a health threat to themselves or their children.<sup>2</sup> We have seen a dramatic effects on our families in Carroll County related to illicit drug use. In 2019 we experienced a 79% increase over 3 years, in grandparents or non-biological parents raising children. We anticipate this rate will be even higher when we assess it this year. In Carroll County, Child Protective Services data demonstrates that 90% of child removals are directly related to drug addiction and its affects on families.

Secondly, Children experience adverse effects of drug use and addiction in their homes related to childhood trauma and the social norm that marijuana use is okay and will not affect children's health. Compound adult use in the homes with adolescents using marijuana and other illicit drugs and this exponentially increases adolescent risk of negative impacts of long-term brain development. Research has demonstrated strong evidence that drug exposure prior to adulthood has longer lasting effects on behavior and the underlying neural development in adolescent brains.<sup>3</sup>

Lastly, my health district was awarded a grant this year from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to address and prevent youth substance use. This funding allows our community to bring together multiple sectors to help address the impacts of substance use/abuse and find local solutions to prevent our youth from using substances. The expansion of medical marijuana creates additional challenges to the very strategies we are trying to implement to limit youth social access to marijuana.

As a practicing licensed health professional, I strongly oppose removing the oversight from medical professionals and license pharmacists to a politically appointed board that resides in a division of Ohio's government with no oversight to the health of Ohioans. Their focus is on business and economics in Ohio. To create laws that directly impact the health and longevity of Ohioans for business and economic gain is, in my opinion, a failure of our government. Afterall, we are all here to serve the people of Ohio.

I oppose the expansion of the forms of medical marijuana and the dosages that will be permitted, concerns me even more. As a board member on our local Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Services Board we see the increase in addiction and the limited local resources we have available in our rural communities to help addicted Ohioans recover. Allowing THC levels to expand to 90% and allowing forms to be accessible for vaping will only fuel the addiction crisis we are seeing across Ohio. In our ADAMH Board catchment area, the most frequently sought service funded by the board for youth under age 18 was marijuana.

Along with my fellow health commissioners across the state, we have opposed Senate Bill 9 through the Public Affairs Committee of the Association of Ohio Health Commissioners. The committee voted to oppose the bill on February 10, 2023.

In summary, I oppose the strategic movement of a medical based marijuana program away from any form of health or medical oversight. I oppose the effects that the bill will have on allowing youth to access marijuana, and the overall health effects it will have on addiction and families in my rural Appalachian County and throughout all communities in Ohio. Business and commerce should not be at the expense of the health and wellbeing of Ohioans.

Chairman Rulli, Ranking Member DeMora and members of the Senate General Committee, this concludes my testimony. I thank you for your time and ask that you please maintain Ohio's existing medical marijuana laws. I am happy to take any questions you might have.

1. Carroll County Community Health Assessment Youth Risk Behavior Health Survey. 2019
2. Pettigrew, J., Miller-Day, M., Krieger, J., & Hecht, M. L. (2012). The Rural Context of Illicit Substance Offers: A Study of Appalachian Rural Adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 27(4), 523-550. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558411432639>

3. Y. Kwan <sup>a</sup>, David L. Eaton <sup>b</sup>, Susan L. Andersen <sup>c</sup>, Diana Dow-Edwards <sup>d</sup>, Edward D. Levin <sup>e</sup>, John Talpos <sup>f</sup>, Charles V. Vorhees <sup>g</sup>, Abby A. Li <sup>h</sup>  
This is your teen brain on drugs: In search of biological factors unique to dependence toxicity in adolescence  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ntt.2020.106916>
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