

HB2706 Testimony

To the Committee on Federal & State Affairs,

I'd like to first thank the committee for taking time to hear HB2706. My name is Heather Hobbs Steppe and I am the president of the Kansas Cannabis Chamber of Commerce and the co-founder of KC Hemp Co.® located in Overland Park KS. I am a graduate of the Leadership Overland Park program. My company, KC Hemp Co.® is responsible for manufacturing and selling industrial hemp products including but not limited to CBD and Delta 8. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Kansas Cannabis Chamber AND KC Hemp Co.® in support of HB2706.

KC Hemp Co.® opened our doors in Downtown Overland Park in 2018 and our first year in business won the Best New Business Award by the DTOP committee due to our impact on the community through education, community involvement and life changing products we were able to provide.

At the start of COVID, we made the difficult decision to close our store front due to the hardships and impacts of the pandemic. We had to let go of our employees and prepare for the loss of revenue alongside a large amount of small businesses in the state. About that time came delta 8 products. A product that is derived from the industrial hemp plant, is federally legal and that packed a greater punch when dealing with pain relief and inflammation for customers. Once word started getting out about this product and the impacts it had, we could barely keep them stocked. Delta 8 products have single handedly saved our business from going under and allowed us the opportunity to continue helping patients all throughout this state.

One of our most prominent customers is a customer in a small town who suffers from PTSD as a war veteran. Because medical cannabis is not legal in the state of Kansas yet, they turned to another alternative and finally found relief in delta 8. This story can be replicated from border to border for patients in Kansas.

I share this story with you because it is a story that often rings true for CBD-based businesses across the great state of Kansas. As the president of the Kanas Cannabis Chamber of Commerce, I have heard from business owners all throughout Kansas that have incredibly similar stories to the one I have just told.

Matching state law, with federal law, would greatly alleviate the gray area that exists within the statue right now. Businesses, law enforcement, and prosecutors are confused on what is and isn't legal and it's causing problems all throughout our systems leading to harassment of business owners and life altering schedule one possession charges for customers.

As you have heard (or will hear) from Ellis County Attorney Robert Anderson, who shares the same sentiment with countless County Attorneys, products created from industrial hemp are not the problem, the lack of regulation is what is of greater concern for industry professionals, law enforcement and customers. Common sense regulations such as: labeling requirements, testing requirements, child proof packaging, 21+ age limitations on products and keeping any intoxicating products behind a counter, are a few ways to implement minimum regulations to encourage public health and consumer safety while allowing businesses to continue to thrive.

The livelihoods of countless business owners and patients are what is truly at risk without passage of this bill. The loss of revenues for businesses would ultimately lead in the loss of tax

dollars for the state, and would drive black market use of illicit products by customers who have finally been able to find relief through plant based products for their ailments. The hemp industry is at a pivotal point in Kansas. As Kansas is looking forward to the future by creating and establishing a medical cannabis program combined with the overwhelming support of Kansas residents for not only medical, but recreational marijuana, it seems counterproductive to try and stop a hemp industry that is wanted, already here, and impossible to completely eradicate due to its federal legality. Products will not stop flowing in and out of the state, and enforcement of them will be nearly impossible to contain.

On behalf of the Chamber, the businesses we represent and my personal business KC Hemp Co.®, we would encourage the committee to pass this bill and provide the regulatory framework needed to ensure the public safety of hemp based products in HB2708 to ensure that public health is at the forefront of industry. Thank you for your time and attention this matter.