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To: Special Ad Hoc Policy Committee
From: David Tamisiea, Executive Director
Date: August 31, 2026
Re: HB 1628 - September 2026 Special Session

The North Dakota Catholic Conference supports HB 1628 which would regulate the sale, purchase, marketing, labeling, distribution, possession, and use of natural kratom under a regulatory and enforcement scheme that closely corresponds to the regulation of tobacco.

Kratom and its derivatives are marketed as herbal supplements and are readily available in gas stations, convenient stores, and smoke shops. Kratom has been used for boosting energy, managing pain, reducing anxiety, helping with sleep, and coping with withdrawal symptoms from other drugs like fentanyl, meth, and heroin.

The evidence, however, is that kratom, and especially its synthetic derivatives, is a dangerous drug that is highly addictive and sometimes even lethal. According to reports from the North Dakota Epidemiology Office, kratom and related compounds were associated with approximately 50 deaths in the state between 2019 and June 2026, either as the primary cause (23 cases) or a contributing cause (26 cases).¹

The FDA warns against use of kratom because of serious adverse events, including liver toxicity, seizures, and substance use disorder. It also warns of serious harmful effects on unborn children in the womb when their mothers consume kratom.² The DEA has recently placed concentrated 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH) and related synthetic derivatives of kratom into Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act to protect public safety because they have “no accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse.”³

The fundamental principle governing all Catholic social teaching is the dignity of the human person and sacredness of all human life. The dignity of the human person refers to the immeasurable value and worth of every single human being, from the first moment of conception until natural death. Human dignity is intrinsic to every person, a gift from God, sacred, and inviolable.

¹ <https://northdakotamonitor.com/2026/07/31/growing-concerns-prompt-calls-to-address-kratom-substances-in-north-dakota/>

² <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/public-health-focus/fda-and-kratom>

³ <https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2026/07/01/dea-temporarily-schedule-7-oh-and-related-substances-protect-public>

Based upon its insistence on human dignity and the sacredness and inviolability of all human life, the Church opposes the use of dangerous and harmful drugs. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that human life and physical health are precious gifts from God that must be cared for, and that “The use of drugs inflicts very grave damage on human health and life. Their use, except on strictly therapeutic grounds, is a grave offense.”⁴

While the North Dakota Catholic Conference supports the proposed regulation of kratom in HB 1628, the Conference would suggest that this regulation does not go far enough. Based upon the evidence of the harmful and dangerous effects of even natural kratom, the Conference encourages the North Dakota Legislature to consider a more rigorous regulatory scheme that prohibits kratom altogether, unless prescribed by a medical practitioner and under the close supervision of a medical practitioner. Even so, HB 1628 is a good start.

We respectfully ask for a **Do Pass** recommendation on HB 1628.

⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2291