

FROM THE DESK OF

Andrew Bakke MD

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Senator Kristin Roers
Senate Majority Caucus Leader
North Dakota District 27

Dear Senator Roers,

My name is Andrew Bakke. I am a lifelong North Dakotan and an emergency physician at the largest hospital in the state. Over the last year I have started to see with alarming regularity, patients suffering from adverse effects of Kratom and its derivatives. Most commonly I see patients in withdrawal. This syndrome is characterized by nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, sweating and anxiety. It reflects a physical and psychological dependance to a chemical they desperately want to quit. I am greatly relieved that the governor and legislature have taken this special session to consider banning these substances.

30 years ago the medical world and general society heard from industry experts that Oxycontin was not addictive and ought to be prescribed liberally to treat pain. Today we see the fruits of that thinking in our ongoing opiate crisis. In my local Substance Use Disorder clinic Kratom addiction is the second most common reason for seeking treatment. Worse yet than withdrawal, are the deaths our state has seen with Kratom derivatives as the primary cause. North Dakota has made great strides in the treatment of substance abuse in the last few years. Lets keep that momentum and stay on top of novel drugs of abuse such as Kratom. In doing so, the only thing we are depriving our citizens of is misery and death.

Many patients started taking Kratom assuming that something legal could not harm them. Senator Axtman's and Representative Heinert's bills are a good start but there is no reason not to include "natural leaf" Kratom in a complete ban. Universally, the patients I see express to me the sentiment that, "This stuff should be illegal!" Let us make it so.

Sincerely, Andrew Bakke MD