

August 31st, 2026

Special Ad Hoc Policy Committee
600 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58505

RE: Support for SB 2408 w/ Amendment

Chairmen Klein and Ruby, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Corey Johnson, and I am a resident of District 23. Professionally, I serve my community as Fire Chief and am a licensed paramedic with nearly two decades of experience in emergency services. I submit this testimony in general support of SB 2408; however, I strongly urge you to consider amendments to include kratom in its natural form.

The evidence is clear that 7-OH (7-hydroxymitragynine) is a potent, opioid-like compound. The Food and Drug Administration highlights addiction and seizures as major health effects for those who consume the product, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention acknowledges that seizures can occur even with first-time use. From a first-responder perspective, seizures that are not recognized and treated immediately carry a high probability of death. Most individuals do not breathe effectively, or at all, while experiencing a seizure. The longer the duration of the seizure, the higher the likelihood of secondary cardiac arrest. Furthermore, there is a severe risk of traumatic injury depending on the person's location or activity when the seizure begins. Throughout the public discussions regarding kratom in recent months, many have made comparisons to other substances on the market, such as alcohol, tobacco, prescription medications, narcotics, and marijuana. The challenge is that this is not an apples-to-apples comparison.

The closest comparison is marijuana, which has limited severe health impacts, primarily associated with brain development in adolescents or cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome (excessive vomiting) in adults. Kratom, conversely, has a known association with causing life-threatening seizures and has documented fatalities associated with its use. While marijuana remains strictly controlled, this bill in its current form would allow kratom.

Although the health benefits of marijuana are still disputed by some, many states, including ours, permit its medical usage under strict controls and physician oversight. Even with the drastic differences in safety profiles between marijuana and kratom, SB 2408 allows a product to be available, without the stringent oversight required for arguably less dangerous substances.

While a few anecdotal studies claim health benefits for kratom, the data is severely limited. Given the lack of sound data and the known risks, it is unreasonable to keep this product available to the public until conclusive information emerges. The generally accepted medical standard requires rigorous scientific testing and controlled trials before a substance is introduced

for public use. The burden of proof must be on the safety of the product. The current consideration to allow kratom without these safeguards does just the opposite.

Thank you for your time and consideration in addressing this critical public safety and health issue for our state. I am available for any follow-up questions or discussion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Corey A. Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'C' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'J'.

Corey A. Johnson
(701) 570-4018