

To Chairman Klemin, Vice Chairwoman Karls, Vice Chairman Vetter, and the esteemed members of the House Judiciary Committee:

My name is McKenzie McCoy, and I have been a registered nurse for almost 20 years. I reside in Watford City, ND and am a constituent of District 26. Kratom, or myragynine, came to my attention about 2 years ago when I started as the Registered Nurse at Providence House, a substance abuse treatment center in western ND. I had not even heard of kratom before but became quickly alarmed by what I was seeing and hearing from clients during their intake assessments and while staying with us. I witnessed numerous kratom withdrawals and heard countless stories from clients about the path kratom led them down. Just recently I watched as 3 men from sober living relapsed on kratom and moved quickly back into their fentanyl addictions.

As I continued to research kratom (articles included below), from its pharmacology to its benefits/risks, clinical implications, reading research articles and really anything I could find, I also heard from individuals and families who have been impacted by kratom addiction or other addictions that ensued after starting the use of kratom, some losing their lives to it. I also read research articles of populations who kratom had helped, and then it didn't – as they ended up with kidney and liver toxicity due to increased tolerance, which required them to increase dosage and frequency of kratom to gain the same level of results.

What really stuck out to me was the financial side to kratom. This is a big money industry, \$1.87 billion in 2023 according to Maximize Market Research. I also noticed the legislative efforts in many states that were quickly quashed by big lobby money. Even the DEA backed down due to pressure from distributors and their lobbyists. The combination of witnessing firsthand the fallout of kratom and the acute interest of distributors to keep kratom unregulated, spurred me to approach Representative Olson to introduce a bill to regulate Kratom in our state.

As I read the testimony of people in opposition to this bill, 90% are out of state individuals, distributors, and retailers. It is obvious to me that the aftermath of kratom usage does not concern them in the least. They walk into a state, make a killing on kratom sales (pun intended), and walk out with their profits, leaving the wreckage for the taxpayers of North Dakota to clean up.

At Providence House, a majority of our clients that come in with stimulant use or opioid use disorder along with co-existing kratom usage are there on ND Medicaid, ND Medicaid Expansion, or recipients of North Dakota's Substance Use Disorder Voucher - all funded by the ND taxpayer. North Dakotans funded the Behavioral Health Department, the department that handles substance abuse program services, to the tune of about \$22 million for the 2023-2025 biennium (\$15 million from the general state fund for the Freedom Through Recovery program and an additional \$7 million was allocated to Community Connect program).

If kratom is not addictive, has valid medical relevancy, and its truly not about the money but about healing a person, then I'd like to ask the kratom industry profiting off North Dakotans to start contributing a percentage of profits to the Behavioral Health budget to offset the cost of side effects and substance use disorder treatment due to kratom. I'm guessing that is an offer that most distributors and retailers will not want to take, because they know their product doesn't stand up to its claims.

I thank the committee for their time on this matter and ask for a 'Do Pass' recommendation on this bill to protect the health and well-being of North Dakotans and to mitigate the financial burden kratom has and will continue to cause our citizens.

I'll stand for questions.

Respectfully,

McKenzie McCoy
Watford City, ND
District 26

Sources

[A Critical Review of the Neuropharmacological Effects of Kratom: An Insight from the Functional Array of Identified Natural Compounds](#)

[Kratom Market: By Form, Product Type, Application, and Distribution Channel](#)

[Kratom: Pharmacology, Clinical Implications, and Outlook: A Comprehensive Review](#)

[Kratom Policy: The Challenge of Balancing Therapeutic Potential with Public Safety](#)

[Legislative Appropriations: 2023-2025 Biennium Report](#)

[The Pharmacology and Toxicology of Kratom: From Traditional Herb to Drug of Abuse](#)