

My name is Judith Newcomb. I am a 53 year old college educated daughter of an Air force Veteran and a North Dakota resident, who has lived in Minot for over 3 decades. I am a wife, mother, grandmother, and a chronic pain survivor and I am opposing HB 1101.

I developed SLE Lupus in 2004. The very first symptom was extreme arthritis pain in my hands and wrists. Over the next decade, I was put on all kinds of medications to try and slow disease progression, try to make a dent in the constant daily pain, and to try and relieve even some of the extreme exhaustion.

Opiates helped in the beginning, but they are not for chronic pain and I found out first hand why. Initially, I was put on Tramadol for 2 years and then switched to Tylenol 4 for 1 year. My tolerance built up fast for both which majorly diminish any sort of pain relief I initially had. I couldn't drive due to the effects of the opiates, my depression was getting worse, my liver enzymes had increased, my extreme exhaustion was back in full force, and if I had to go to the ER or walk in clinic for other medical issues, I was treated poorly as it was automatically assumed I was there for more powerful opiates. And to top it all off... I was subjected to drug urine tests before I could get my prescription refilled, to make sure I had that opiate in my system which meant I wasn't selling it. That alone was so degrading!

In early 2016, I couldn't take it anymore. I slowly took myself off the Tylenol 4. There was no point in continuing to take it since my chronic pain was back to being severe. In the weeks that followed, my depression got worse to where I would lay in bed all day. My quality of life was non-existent. I felt completely defeated and didn't know what to do. What kind of mother and wife was I if I couldn't even get out of bed?

It was during one of those very hopeless and depressed days that I first learned about Kratom. It was the end of August in 2016 and start of taking my quality of life back!

Just as I had then, and still do, for any substance I take, I majorly researched Kratom and potential vendors. I read all the information about Kratom safety, how to select a trusted vendor, and to NEVER buy it at a gas station due to the possibility of it being adulterated with Tramadol and/or other fillers making it very unsafe.

I ordered a "beginners packet" from a very respected and trusted vendor that tested all their kratom through an independent laboratory. They posted all the results, which showed no fillers, no adulterations, no salmonella, just 100% ground, dried, Kratom leaves.

The first time I tried Kratom, I knew this was my answer! I could get better pain relief, help with my extreme exhaustion,

and still be able to drive? YES!! I FINALLY HAD HOPE AGAIN!

Kratom has the ability to do what no other opiate prescription or even medical marijuana can do! I can take a spoonful of Kratom and still drive my car, spend time with my grandkids, and have a completely clear head so I can be a functioning member of my family and community again! It brings my pain level down from a 10 to a 5, and that is a level I can handle! Even my liver enzymes came down to normal levels where they have remained since I started Kratom.

Over the past 8 years of Kratom use, I have helped many other North Dakotans find out how Kratom can help their situation. To GIVE HOPE to my alcoholic friend who has chronic pain and therefore was having great difficulty getting sober since she used alcohol to numb her pain. Kratom helped her alcohol withdraw symptoms and continues to help her chronic pain.

Another younger friend had an unexpected pregnancy and was a new mother that used alcohol and prescription opiates to get through her day. She didn't want to be that kind of mother anymore and used Kratom to get and stay sober. And since it has such a positive effect on her ADHD, she is now attending Minot State University!

I have many examples like these of how Kratom has improved the lives of my fellow North Dakotans. But, I also have an example of how NOT having Kratom as an option for chronic pain can end a life.

My brother in law committed suicide just 2 months ago right after Thanksgiving. He was a 30 year prescription opiate addict who was given prescription hydrocodone for a severe job related back injury 3 decades ago.

Every minute of every day since December 2nd 2024, I think of how Kratom could have saved his life and how my nephews would still have their father. Instead, when their kids are old enough, they will have to explain why Grandpa was not in their lives anymore.

This man, who was a husband, father, grandfather, brother, and uncle was such a kind soul that would be there for his family and friends in an instant, if needed. But all of that changed when his doctors stopped prescribing his opiate pain medicine. At that point, he was already addicted AND still had severe chronic pain. He found himself hopeless, depressed, and didn't see any other way to stop the mental and physical pain. If I had known years ago what he kept hidden from most family and friends, I could have introduced him to this plant that I know would've changed the course of his life.

I can't change the past, but I can advocate to keep Kratom legal and obtainable in North Dakota now and in the future.

Keeping Kratom accessible is VITALLY important, not only for myself, but for my 26 year old daughter who is in the processing of being diagnosed with an autoimmune disorder, that I know, from personal experience, is SLE Lupus.

This means she needs to have access to SAFE, unadulterated, tested, 100% pure Kratom leaves from vendors that follow safe manufacturing processes.

So I am asking you, my fellow North Dakotans, to not only oppose the scheduling of Kratom, but to adopt into law the Kratom Consumer Protection Act so my daughter, along with all North Dakotan chronic pain patients, wounded Military Veterans, PTSD survivors, alcohol and opiate use disorder patients, and treatment resistant depression patients will have the option of safe and accessible Kratom.

Thank you for your consideration and time,

Judith Newcomb  
Minot, North Dakota