

## **Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 497**

**Chair Gossage and honorable Members of the Public Health and Welfare Committee. I stand before you today in support of Senate Bill 497.**

I am State Senator Jeff Klemp, representing District 5.

I would like to start with a thank you to the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI) and our Kansas Attorney General's team for their guidance and efforts in crafting this responsible legislation.

SB 497 adds kratom to Schedule I of the Uniform Controlled Substances Act, classifying it as a substance with high abuse potential and no accepted medical use, effectively banning its sale and possession in Kansas.

7-Hydroxymitragynine (7-OH), the synthetic form of kratom's potent metabolite, is claimed to be 13 times stronger than morphine. It binds to  $\mu$ -opioid receptors, causing tolerance, physical/psychological dependence, and overdose via respiratory depression. Studies show high reinforcing potential, mirroring opioids like oxycodone.

We have seen a positive drop in Fentanyl positivity in workplace testing, only to see a dramatic rise in 7-OH positivity—higher than oxycodone, hydrocodone, and fentanyl combined—in over 1,000 random samples. This shift signals users switching to this unregulated synthetic opioid.

7-OH is a grave public health threat: an unapproved, lab-made opioid sold over-the-counter in gas stations and vape shops, accessible to minors. It risks addiction, overdose deaths, and reverses gains against fentanyl. Without FDA oversight, it offers no unique benefits over regulated pain meds. We must ban it now to prevent a new opioid crisis.

Preying on young adults—by peddling addictive gummies, drinks, and tablets under names like "7-Hydroxy"—must be stopped. Rehab testimonies confirm severe addiction. Some argue we should allow this on our streets, but that ignores how it targets vulnerable youth, fostering dependence without medical supervision. Freedom doesn't mean endangering lives for profit.

Our neighboring states and cities are banning this synthetic 7-OH and restricting kratom to adults 21+. They are recognizing these dangers. Kansas must follow suit statewide with SB 497 to protect our communities.

I urge my colleagues to pass SB 497 immediately. Thank you.