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ICYMI: As Ohio's Kratom & 7-OH Ban Debate Intensifies, Op-Ed Highlights Decades of the Failed "War on Drugs" That Show Bans Rarely Work

WASHINGTON, D.C. – In case you missed it, a recent [Guest Column](#) published in the *Columbus Dispatch* offered a timely perspective on Ohio's ongoing debate over kratom and 7-hydroxymitragynine (commonly called 7-OH), urging lawmakers to rethink a broad ban in favor of balanced policy.

Bryan Mauk, CEO of End It for Good, has over 15 years of experience supporting people affected by addiction, homelessness and incarceration. In the op-ed, **Mauk notes we have seen this path before, writing:**

"Unfortunately, decades of the failed 'war on drugs' show that such bans rarely work. Instead, they push drug use underground, create black markets and make drugs more dangerous, all while criminalizing users."

- **Bans push consumers toward unregulated sellers** and reduce product transparency, exactly the opposite of public safety goals.
- **Policy should prioritize risk-based regulation:** labeling, testing, age limits, and enforcement against bad actors, rather than blanket prohibition.
- The national conversation is unfolding amid evolving federal posture on 7-OH products, **increasing the urgency for policymakers to get this right.**

HART is urging lawmakers and regulators to adopt a framework that protects consumers while preserving access for responsible adults, including:

1. **Mandatory lab testing** and clear labeling of alkaloid content
2. **Age restrictions** and child-resistant packaging
3. **Manufacturing standards** and retailer accountability
4. **Targeted enforcement** against adulterated, mislabeled, or illicit products

"If the goal is public health, the solution is regulation, not a ban that guarantees a black market, reduces transparency, and harms the very people seeking safer alternatives," said Jeff Smith, Policy Director for the Holistic Alternative Recovery Trust (HART).

Mauk's column joins voices across the nation who are sounding the alarm. Across recent opinion pages, consumer advocates and policy writers are making the same point, prohibition won't end

demand, it will push it underground, increasing risk while stripping away transparency and responsible standards and criminalizing otherwise law-abiding citizens..

In a December op-ed, *The Well News* **warned that banning 7-OH would predictably be a “boon” for black markets**, repeating the same historic mistakes that turned public-health concerns into unsafe underground markets. In a separate January op-ed circulated in Ohio, advocates argued the state’s focus should remain on fentanyl, not criminalizing adults who rely on regulated products for pain management and harm reduction.

Policies driven by fear rather than evidence have left chronic pain patients cut off from stable care, turned away by pharmacies, and pushed into dangerous, demoralizing situations. That’s the backdrop for Missouri’s recent actions against kratom-derived 7-OH, noted in an op-ed that it is “an imperfect but essential tool that, for many patients, is one of the last options” allowing them to function, work, and avoid far riskier alternatives.

Meanwhile, a growing grassroots response has emerged nationally, with organizers pointing to tens of thousands of Americans urging regulators to choose **science-based regulation over prohibition**.

About the Holistic Alternative Recovery Trust (HART)

The Holistic Alternative Recovery Trust (HART) is a national nonprofit dedicated to promoting evidence-based, transparent policy around natural recovery compounds. HART supports responsible regulation that protects consumers while encouraging innovation in safe, science-driven alternatives to traditional pharmaceuticals.

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