

# Ohio GOP Proposes Bills to Regulate Delta-8 THC and Hemp

## Ohio Lawmakers Push for Regulation of Adult-Use Hemp Products Amid Calls for Stricter Controls

As Ohio residents anticipate the legal sale of recreational marijuana, state lawmakers are focusing their efforts on regulating adult-use hemp products. Republican legislators in both chambers of the General Assembly have introduced bills aimed at controlling the sale and use of these products, responding to concerns over their accessibility and potential for abuse.

### House Bill 642 Introduced for Hemp Regulation

State Representative Sara Carruthers (R-Hamilton) recently introduced House Bill 642, which mandates the Ohio Director of Agriculture to issue recommendations concerning adult-use hemp products. If enacted, the bill would require a detailed report on the sale and use of hemp products that could be intoxicating. This report would be developed in collaboration with the Ohio Department of Public Safety.

Key components of the proposed legislation include defining adult-use hemp products, establishing THC content limits, setting minimum age requirements for purchase, and specifying testing and labeling standards. Additionally, the bill proposes measures to ensure compliance, including granting inspection authority to the Ohio Investigative Unit within the Department of Public Safety. The recommendations would be valid for one year if adopted.

### Governor DeWine and the Push for Regulation

Earlier this year, Governor Mike DeWine (R) urged lawmakers to ban or regulate delta-8 THC, a hemp-derived compound that has been legally sold due to its low THC content. DeWine highlighted concerns over its intoxicating effects and the absence of regulatory controls, which have allowed it to be sold without age restrictions. The governor stressed the need for legislative action to prevent the sale of potentially harmful products, especially to minors, as reports of delta-8 poisoning incidents in Ohio have risen.

### Senate Bill 278 and Its Provisions

In the Ohio Senate, Senators Kirk Schuring (R-Canton) and Steve Huffman (R-Tipp City) introduced Senate Bill 278. This bill aims to prohibit the sale of adult-use hemp products to individuals under 21 and requires that these products be kept behind the counter in stores. It also mandates ID verification for customers wishing to purchase these products.

### Current Status of Recreational Cannabis Sales

Despite the legalization of recreational marijuana in Ohio following the passage of Issue 2, legal sales have yet to commence. The Ohio Division of Cannabis Control has not issued certificates of operation to dispensaries, which are necessary for them to begin selling recreational marijuana. Over 200 facilities have received provisional licenses, with final approval dependent on meeting operational requirements, including inspections.

As of now, four cultivators and six processors have obtained certificates of operation, but dispensaries must also receive these certifications before they can legally sell recreational products. The Division of Cannabis Control has indicated that the issuance of certificates will be staggered, based on the completion of application processes, rather than on a single start date for sales.

## **Future Outlook**

Ohio lawmakers are currently on break and are not expected to reconvene until after the November elections. The ongoing legislative efforts reflect a growing focus on ensuring that adult-use hemp products are adequately regulated to protect public health and safety. As the state moves closer to implementing recreational marijuana sales, these regulatory measures will play a crucial role in shaping Ohio's cannabis market.

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