

Ohio to Limit Hemp THC Products to Licensed Cannabis Retailers

Ohio Lawmakers Move to Restrict Hemp Derived THC Products to Licensed Cannabis Retailers

Lawmakers Push to Close Loopholes in Ohio's Expanding Hemp Market

Ohio lawmakers are advancing legislation that would restrict the sale of hemp-derived THC products including delta-8 and other intoxicating cannabinoids — to licensed cannabis dispensaries. The move comes amid growing concern that unregulated hemp products are being sold outside of Ohio's tightly controlled medical and adult-use cannabis systems.

The proposed restrictions aim to address what regulators and health officials describe as a “legal gray area” in the state's hemp market. These products, while derived from federally legal hemp, often contain psychoactive levels of THC that mimic the effects of traditional marijuana.

Hemp Derived THC Products Under Scrutiny in Ohio

Hemp-derived THC products, such as delta-8, delta-10, and THC-O, have flooded convenience stores, smoke shops, and online retailers across Ohio. These items are typically marketed as legal alternatives to cannabis, but critics argue that they pose public safety risks, particularly to minors.

Many of these products are not subject to the same testing, packaging, and potency regulations that apply to cannabis sold in state-licensed dispensaries. As a result, lawmakers and industry leaders have expressed growing alarm about product consistency and contamination.

According to Ohio's legislative summary, the new bill would prohibit the sale of intoxicating hemp products outside of licensed dispensaries, effectively merging the regulation of hemp-derived THC with the state's existing cannabis framework.

Protecting Consumers and Ensuring Product Safety

Supporters of the legislation argue that tighter restrictions are essential to protect consumers from potentially unsafe or mislabeled hemp products. By confining the sale of THC-containing hemp items to licensed cannabis retailers, lawmakers hope to enforce product testing, age verification, and labeling standards already in place for marijuana sales.

Proponents also note that many unregulated hemp products contain synthetic THC variants, created through chemical conversion processes that may leave behind harmful residues. Regulated cannabis dispensaries,

they argue, are better equipped to ensure product safety and compliance with state laws.

However, hemp industry advocates warn that the proposal could disrupt small businesses, including local hemp farmers and shop owners who depend on selling these products. They are urging lawmakers to consider regulatory solutions that preserve the legal hemp trade without shutting it down entirely.

Economic Implications for Ohio's Hemp and Cannabis Markets

The proposed legislation could reshape Ohio's growing hemp and cannabis industries. Hemp-derived products currently represent a multimillion-dollar market, and restricting sales to cannabis dispensaries may consolidate economic power within a smaller number of licensed operators.

While cannabis dispensaries stand to gain new product lines and increased revenue, many hemp businesses fear being regulated out of existence. Lawmakers have indicated they may explore transitional measures or licensing options for existing hemp retailers, but details remain unclear.

Economists predict that if enacted, the law could drive more customers toward state-regulated cannabis outlets, potentially boosting tax revenue but also creating short-term disruption for independent hemp sellers.

Aligning with National Trends in Hemp Regulation

Ohio's move mirrors a national trend as multiple states — including New York, Minnesota, and Virginia — take action to restrict or ban intoxicating hemp-derived cannabinoids. State regulators argue that federal law under the 2018 Farm Bill unintentionally created a loophole allowing psychoactive hemp products to be sold outside of cannabis oversight.

In response, the U.S. Congress has discussed revising the definition of hemp in upcoming farm legislation to exclude products containing intoxicating levels of THC. Ohio's proposed restrictions may serve as a model for future state and federal reforms aimed at closing these gaps.

What's Next for Ohio's Legislative Process

The bill is currently being debated in the Ohio House of Representatives, with strong backing from both public health officials and cannabis industry stakeholders. If passed, it would require the Ohio Department of Commerce to oversee enforcement and ensure hemp-derived THC products meet cannabis-level safety standards.

Opponents are expected to push for amendments that protect hemp businesses while maintaining consumer safety. A final vote could take place before the end of the legislative session, setting the stage for implementation in early 2026.

A Defining Moment for Ohio's Cannabis and Hemp Future

Ohio's efforts to regulate hemp-derived THC products underscore the broader challenges of balancing innovation, consumer protection, and fair competition in the rapidly evolving cannabis landscape. Whether this legislation will unify or divide the state's hemp and cannabis industries remains to be seen, but one thing is clear. The rules governing what's considered "legal THC" are changing fast.

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