
Public Testimony in Support of Ordinance 251028 — Total Kratom Ban

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Date Fri 2/6/2026 4:16 PM

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Members of the Kansas City Council,

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of Ordinance 251028, including a total ban on kratom and kratom-derived products, for inclusion in the public record.

Kansas City is facing a public-health issue driven by the unchecked retail sale of unregulated psychoactive substances. Kratom and its potent derivatives — including 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH) — are currently sold in gas stations, smoke shops, and convenience stores without medical oversight, dosing standards, or meaningful safety controls. These products are not benign supplements. Kratom is an opioid-active substance, and high-potency extracts and 7-OH products significantly increase the risk of dependence, respiratory depression, and overdose.

I am also speaking as a parent who has lived the consequences of this normalization. I lost my 25 year old son Austin after kratom exposure. His death was determined to be caused by kratom toxicity alone, with no illicit drugs, prescription opioids, benzodiazepines, or other central nervous system depressants present. His autopsy findings were consistent with opioid-type respiratory depression. This was not a matter of misuse or polydrug exposure — it was the predictable outcome of allowing an opioid-active substance to be sold without safeguards or medical supervision.

Claims that kratom can be safely managed through labeling or consumer-protection models are not supported by real-world outcomes. Jurisdictions that attempted regulation continue to report poison center calls, emergency department visits, seizures, liver injury, and overdose events. Regulation has failed to control product potency, concentration, or patterns of use. Continued legal availability has normalized risk rather than reduced it.

Kansas City's consideration of a total ban reflects an appropriate and responsible public-health response to a demonstrated failure of regulation. Ordinance 251028 does not represent overreach — it represents prevention. Removing kratom and kratom-derived products from retail commerce is necessary to protect residents, prevent further harm, and avoid repeating the same mistakes seen in prior drug crises where delay and half-measures cost lives.

This ordinance is especially important given the rapid proliferation of high-potency kratom extracts and 7-OH products that did not exist during earlier policy discussions. Allowing these substances to remain legal while harms escalate places lives at risk.

For these reasons, I urge the City Council to adopt Ordinance 251028 in full, including a complete ban on kratom and kratom-derived products. Public health must take precedence over industry interests and unproven regulatory promises.

Thank you for your consideration and for entering this testimony into the public record.

Respectfully,
Dan Gibbs