

From: [Kelli Anne](#)
To: [Clerk](#)
Subject: Ordinance #251028
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To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Kelli McCann. I am writing in support of including kratom in Ordinance #251028.

I work in the educational system as a speech pathologist. On a Friday, September 13, 2024, I came home from work and was settling in when two deputy sheriffs arrived at my door. I was trying to make sense why they were there; my initial thought was related to a fake bomb threat at one of our schools earlier that day. One of the deputies began talking about my son Benjamin not showing up at work, something that was highly unusual for him. Benjamin was a warehouse operations manager at Coca Cola and he had never been late in the seven years he was employed there. I felt an instant panic that Benjamin was hurt and I needed to get to the hospital. Then, one of the deputies voiced my worst fear as a mother: "Your son was found deceased." I have always felt deep empathy for anyone experiencing the loss of a child, but I had no clue about the depth of the pain until I experienced it myself.

The coroner informed me that only kratom was found in Benjamin's apartment. She ordered a full autopsy and toxicology. Benjamin and I had only talked about kratom once. Years ago, he told me he had found an herbal substance to help manage his psoriatic arthritis pain. He was led to believe it was a safe and natural alternative to pain medication, and about as addictive as coffee. He even suggested I try it for my back pain. Fortunately, I didn't.

While I waited for the autopsy and toxicology results, I began researching kratom. I was shocked by the political climate and controversy surrounding it, the stories of people struggling with addiction to it, the reported deaths, how easily accessible it is and that it is a billion-dollar industry.

There is a recovery group on Facebook called "Quitting Kratom Support—There is a Way Out" with 7,700 members, as well as a subgroup with 2,600 members. These are just two of many recovery groups. Additionally, there are countless online kratom groups and vendors, many of which offer free samples. Consumers share advice on how to use kratom for various medical conditions such as diabetes, mental illness, chronic pain, and even addiction to other substances. There are websites that provide step-by-step instructions on increasing its potency and the different ways to use it. One of my greatest concerns is how easy it is for young people to access and hide kratom. A recent news article reported that five junior high students in Georgia were hospitalized after ingesting it.

Two months after Benjamin's death, I received his toxicology and autopsy results. His toxicology revealed that Benjamin died from acute mitragynine intoxication. Nothing atypical was found in his autopsy. Initially, I believed that kratom needed to be

regulated. However, after much research, I now believe that simple regulation is not enough to protect families like mine and the public at large.

I feel a responsibility to share Benjamin's story, to warn others about the risks of kratom, and to advocate for it to be banned or strictly scheduled.

Thank you so much for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Kelli McCann