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Subject: Include natural kratom (mitragynine-containing products) within Ordinance 251028
Date: Monday, December 8, 2025 2:43:14 PM

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Dear Councilmembers,

Thank you for accepting written public comment regarding Ordinance 251028. Please put this email on public record. I am writing to urge you in the strongest possible terms to include natural kratom within this ordinance. My position comes from personal tragedy supported by medical fact: my 25-year-old son and only child, Austin Gibbs, died from what kratom advocates call “natural kratom.”

On December 6, 2023, Austin died alone in his bedroom after consuming a natural kratom product he believed was safe. His official autopsy — conducted by the Montgomery County (Ohio) Coroner — concluded:

- Cause of Death: Intoxication by mitragynine
- Toxicology: Mitragynine only; no fentanyl, no illicit drugs, no prescription opioids
- Findings: Pulmonary edema and frothy airway fluid consistent with opioid-type respiratory depression

Austin died from pure mitragynine, the primary alkaloid in natural kratom leaf. His death proves that natural kratom itself is lethal.

The Science Advocates Avoid: Mitragynine Converts Into a Far More Potent Opioid

Kratom advocates often insist natural kratom is harmless because it hasn't been synthetically altered. But what matters is what happens inside the

human body, not on the packaging.

Once ingested, the liver converts mitragynine into 7-hydroxymitragynine, a compound 10–20 times more potent at the mu-opioid receptor. This metabolic process explains dependence, withdrawal, respiratory depression, and fatalities — including my son’s.

Austin did not consume anything synthetic. His own liver converted “natural kratom” into a dangerous opioid.

Regulation Does Not Work — And Has Already Failed in Multiple States

Some will ask you to “regulate, not ban.” But regulation has failed everywhere it has been tried.

States such as Utah and Georgia adopted the Kratom Consumer Protection Act. The outcomes were the same:

- Continued emergency room cases
- Continued addictions
- Continued deaths
- High-potency kratom products still sold in gas stations

Utah’s own Republican bill sponsor, Senator Todd Weiler, now publicly regrets regulating kratom, acknowledging he would have supported a full ban had he known the consequences.

Regulation cannot fix a drug whose danger comes from the alkaloid itself, not contamination.

My son died from pure mitragynine.

No label, ID check, or testing requirement would have prevented his death.

Advocates Admit the Danger Without Realizing It

Kratom advocates proudly testify — sometimes waiting hours for their turn — insisting that kratom is so powerful it helped them quit opioids such as heroin or morphine to ease their debilitating pain. And it is important for this Council to understand what they are actually referring to.

These individuals are not talking about 7-hydroxymitragynine or synthetic derivatives. They are defending natural, mitragynine-dominant kratom products — the same type of product that killed my son.

They proudly describe a product so opioid-like that it replaces heroin — and then argue it should remain available in gas stations and smoke shops, without medical supervision and without real oversight.

That alone should raise alarms for every policymaker in this room.

Natural Does Not Mean Safe — Austin's Death Proves That

Advocates insist kratom is harmless because it is “natural.” But:

- Hemlock is natural.
- Tobacco is natural.
- Heroin originates from a plant.

The issue is not plant origin.

The issue is whether a substance can suppress breathing, cause dependence,

and kill.

Natural kratom can — and in my son's case, it did.

Kansas City Must Not Leave a Loophole

If Kansas City excludes natural kratom from Ordinance 251028, you will leave open the exact loophole that killed my son and that continues to endanger families across the country.

My son did not ingest a synthetic product. He did not ingest 7-OH.

He used a natural kratom product, fully legal and marketed as safe, and he never woke up.

Kansas City has the opportunity to prevent future tragedies by addressing the evidence clearly and decisively.

I am asking you, as a father who will never see his son again:

Please include natural kratom in this ordinance.

Close the loophole.

Do not allow this substance to remain on store shelves simply because it grows on a tree.

Families should not have to experience the preventable, devastating loss that mine did.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to public safety.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Gibbs

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Sent from my iPhone