

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF SARAH PITTA

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In Support of SB 557

House Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee — April 8, 2026

Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Sarah Pitta. My husband Dan and I co-founded MitraSpec LLC in 2015. What started in our kitchen has grown into a GMP-compliant facility with loyal customers across the country. We manufacture and sell natural kratom leaf products — powder and capsules. This is not just our business. It is our family's life and our livelihood.

I am testifying in support of SB 557 and wish to submit this expanded written testimony for the committee's record.

I. WHAT WE SEE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COUNTER

I want this committee to understand who uses natural kratom leaf, because the picture painted by some of the testimony you have received does not match the reality we see every day.

Our customers are parents, veterans, nurses, teachers, retirees, construction workers, and small business owners. They are people who found natural kratom leaf and it changed their quality of life. Many of them came to kratom after years of prescription medications that stopped working or came with side effects they could no longer tolerate. They are not "drug seekers." They are people looking for a better option for managing their daily lives. We hear their stories every single day, and we know what this plant means to them.

I want to thank the sponsors of SB 557 for protecting these people's access to natural kratom leaf. The distinction this bill makes between natural leaf and synthetic or semisynthetic products is something Dan and I have been advocating for across multiple states. It means the world to us and to our customers that New Hampshire got this right.

II. THE HUMAN COST OF THE 7-OH MARKETING PROBLEM

But I also need to tell you what else we have seen, because this is the part that keeps me up at night.

Over the past two years, we have watched some of our long-time customers — people who had been using natural kratom leaf responsibly for years — get drawn into concentrated synthetic products that were marketed as kratom. They did not know the difference. They walked into a gas station or a vape shop, saw a product on a shelf that said "kratom" or "enhanced kratom" or "kratom extract," and they trusted that label. They had no reason not to.

These are not people who were trying to get high. They were people who were already managing their lives with natural kratom and thought they were simply trying another version of the same thing. They did not know they were consuming a product that was many times more potent and carried a fundamentally different risk profile. They did not know because the companies that manufactured those products deliberately made them look like natural kratom products.

Some of those customers developed dependency. That is not their fault. The fault lies squarely with the companies that manufactured concentrated synthetic products, packaged them in candy wrappers and

colorful bottles, sold them with no age restrictions, and labeled them in ways designed to blur the line between their products and natural kratom leaf.

III. THE POSSESSION PROVISION WILL PUNISH THE WRONG PEOPLE

This is why I am deeply concerned about the possession provision in SB 557 as currently written.

Section 318-B:52 makes it illegal to possess synthetic or semisynthetic kratom. Under existing New Hampshire law (RSA 318-B:26), unauthorized possession of a Schedule II substance is a Class B felony — punishable by up to 7 years in prison and a \$25,000 fine. Combined with the bill's immediate effective date, there is no grace period. No transition. No time for consumers to understand what they have, seek help if they need it, or safely dispose of products they purchased legally.

Think about what that means in practice. A person who has been using one of these products — a product they bought legally, in a store, off a shelf, labeled as "kratom" — could be using that product one day as responsibly as they know how, and the next day they are a felon. Not because they did anything differently. Not because they harmed anyone. But because the law changed overnight and they were still holding a product they did not fully understand.

The manufacturing, distribution, and sale prohibitions in this bill will reach the companies that created this problem. We support those provisions completely. But the possession provision will not reach those companies. It will reach the consumers who were already their victims. We are asking this committee to consider whether criminalizing these consumers is truly the intent of this legislation — or whether they deserve a grace period, a civil framework, or at minimum a transition period to seek help or safely dispose of products they were misled into purchasing.

IV. RESPONSE TO CALLS FOR BANNING ALL KRATOM ALKALOIDS

I am aware that testimony has been submitted to this committee asking that the bill be expanded to ban mitragynine — the primary alkaloid in natural kratom leaf — effectively banning all kratom in New Hampshire.

As someone who talks to kratom consumers every single day, I can tell you what that would mean. It would mean that the veteran in Concord who uses kratom to manage his day without prescription opioids becomes a criminal. It would mean the nurse in Manchester who uses kratom to get through her 12-hour shifts without the side effects of the medications she was previously prescribed becomes a criminal. It would mean the retired teacher in Keene who found kratom after decades of chronic pain becomes a criminal.

These are real people. They are your constituents. And they would be stunned to learn that an organization whose primary mission is opposing marijuana legalization is lobbying to take away a product that has genuinely improved their lives.

The testimony calling for an expanded ban cites death statistics that, upon examination, actually undermine the case for banning natural leaf. The study they reference reports that 93% of kratom-associated deaths involved multiple substances and 79.3% involved at least one other opioid. Only 6.5% involved kratom alone — and even those cases do not distinguish between natural leaf and concentrated synthetic products. The CDC's own March 2026 MMWR report acknowledges that the poison control data "don't include details on what kratom products were ingested" and that "conclusions about formulation-specific risk cannot be drawn."

Banning natural kratom leaf based on data that overwhelmingly reflects polypharmacy deaths involving other opioids, and that cannot distinguish between natural leaf and synthetic concentrates, is not public health policy. It is prohibition without evidence.

V. THE FERMENTATION CONCERN

I also want to flag a technical concern that directly affects our business and others like it. The bill's definition of synthetic kratom in Section 318-B:51(I) lists "fermentation" as a biosynthetic means of creating synthetic kratom. However, many traditional kratom preparations involve fermenting whole leaves. Bentuangie kratom and many red vein strains are produced through whole-leaf fermentation — a centuries-old traditional food preparation technique practiced in Southeast Asia.

We sell Bentuangie products. So do many responsible vendors across the country. These are natural leaf products, not synthetic alkaloid concentrates. The bill already exempts "traditional food preparation techniques, such as heating or extracting," but fermentation appears on the prohibited side of that line. A brief clarifying amendment specifying that fermentation of whole plant material is considered a traditional food preparation technique would protect legitimate natural products without weakening the bill's intent.

VI. CONCLUSION

Dan and I have operated our business in New Hampshire for over a decade. We chose to build our company here because New Hampshire values individual liberty, personal responsibility, and limited government. SB 557 reflects those values. It targets the actual source of harm — synthetic products sold through deceptive marketing — without punishing the millions of responsible adults who use natural kratom leaf to manage their daily lives.

We strongly support SB 557. We ask only that the committee consider two modest amendments: removing or modifying the possession provision to protect consumers who were misled, and clarifying the fermentation language to protect traditional natural kratom preparations.

We oppose any expansion of this bill to include mitragynine or natural kratom leaf. The science does not support it, the data does not support it, and the people of New Hampshire who rely on this plant do not deserve to be criminalized for using a product that has improved their lives.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

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