

My name is April Hiltabidle, from Derry PA and I'm a 32 year old wife, mother, and full time direct supports professional assisting adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I've been a kratom consumer and advocate for 3 years now because I've seen the positive impact this botanical has had on the lives of myself, my husband, and countless others. Prior to learning about, researching, and eventually choosing to add this supplement to my regimen, my husband and I were both heavy drinkers trying to self-medicate our various issues but of course that led to nothing but problems. I struggle with insomnia, ADHD, depression, generalized anxiety disorder, and chronic pain from fibromyalgia. The pain was never controlled because I was too fearful to even speak candidly with my doctor assuming I would automatically be labeled as a drug seeker due to my age and be disregarded and I cannot take over the counter anti-inflammatories due to my history of stomach ulcers. The pharmaceuticals prescribed for fibro leave much to be desired and usually have more side effects than what they're worth. I've been on every sleeping pill, antidepressant, and anxiety medication out there and while some things would work for a couple months, others didn't help at all and instead caused more problems. Since I began taking kratom on a regular basis, I was able to quit drinking entirely, discontinue sleeping pills and antidepressants, and reduce my ADHD and anxiety medications. I've become a better wife, mother, employee, and caregiver with kratom as part of my daily routine and the only negative consequence it's caused in my life is the stress from constantly fearing the state, local, and/or federal government will take away my right to drink a harmless tea! I could not and would not consume a substance that impaired my ability to function and make the quick, sometimes lifesaving judgement calls that I'm faced with daily at work and at home, which is one of the many reasons kratom has been so beneficial to me. It doesn't get me high, impair my judgement, slow my response time, etc., If anything, my focus is improved, I'm more alert, more patient, and more motivated, not to mention that I can get a lot more accomplished when my pain level is tolerable.

*Mitragyna speciosa* (kratom) is a plant indigenous to Southeast Asia and has been used by natives for hundreds of years to reduce pain, increase work performance, help reduce symptoms of opiate withdrawal, among other uses. It's a relative to the coffee plant and according to available research, is no more harmful or addictive than it's coffee cousin. It's made up of many different alkaloids and their functions make the plant an atypical opioid because it contains both opioid receptor agonists and antagonists. This combination helps block the typical high people get from opiates, while still providing pain relief. Scientists have also proven that kratom does not cause respiratory depression, the common killer from pharmaceutical opiates, because of signaling the g-protein pathway which is entirely different from the way normal opioids work. The 44 kratom associated deaths reported by the FDA have all been debunked. These cases included 9 deaths from Sweden I believe, that were caused by an adulterated product called Krypton which was laced with a synthetic compound akin to but more potent than tramadol, a gunshot victim, a man who fell out of a window yet refused treatment, a suicide, a car accident, and multiple poly drug use cases. Even if they had been caused by kratom, there is a greater risk of death by falling out of bed or drinking too much water if you run the perspective numbers over the course of the last decade and hundreds of people die every year from complications related to Tylenol.

Today I respectfully request that you look further into this botanical and follow the science before deciding whether or not to enact a ban and taking away this beneficial supplement used by thousands of Pennsylvanians and millions of Americans. You can find links to scientific studies and reports by visiting the websites of the American Kratom association, the botanical education alliance, the national kratom coalition, kratom united, the drug policy alliance, and the Kratom trade association. I lost my brother to a heroin/fentanyl overdose in November and I promise you I wouldn't be fighting to keep kratom accessible if I thought it could cause harm. Perhaps we can follow the path currently being forged by the state of Utah and soon to be enacted by Georgia, called the Kratom Consumer Protection Act. This law establishes useful guidelines to protect consumers from adulterated kratom products, makes sure that the product is thoroughly tested and clearly labeled, and establishes age restrictions, all of which advocates can agree are beneficial to the industry and consumers.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter! You will find my contact information below if there is anything you need or for any questions you may have.

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