



1/22/20

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Sean Nicholson and I work in a high capacity within the recovery community in the state of Maryland. I was a founding member of the Board of Directors for Phoenix Foundation Of Maryland, a nonprofit that is opening a recovery high school in Frederick, Maryland. I am the Executive Producer of "Heroin's Grip," a documentary film about the opioid crisis in Frederick, Maryland. I am the founder of Solid Ground Recovery, which operates three sober living environments for men and women in Frederick County. I work with people in crisis, helping them navigate the complicated process of obtaining resources and or treatment to get the help they so desperately need. I battled with substance use disorder for 15 years and I am proud to say that I have been clean and sober for almost four and a half years.

In regards to Kratom, I have witnessed the effects of this addictive substance in the work we do with sober living. Kratom is very hard to detect or regulate if being abused from a recreational standpoint. Solid Ground Recovery works with The Frederick County Drug Court Treatment Program and closely with Parole and Probation and they have a hard time managing and detecting people who are abusing this substance. Kratom is not detectable on a 16 panel drug test and is not tested for in a standard urine screening with a confirmation lab, but can be tested by a lab if specified and larger expenses. The effects of this substance are similar to an opiate. People are impaired and sometimes incoherent; they nod out, scratch and itch, similar to someone on heroin, fentanyl, or an opiate. In the work we do with people in active addiction or in crisis, we have experienced people trying to detox themselves or substitute it for their opioid addiction, only to fail. It's readily available and is very inexpensive to obtain, compared to a narcotic.



Kratom could possibly be beneficial to people for pain and for opioid withdrawal, but we have no way to govern or regulate the substance. I am well aware of pain, as I have broke both my legs and did not walk for two years. I addition, I've had my left eye removed and had 26 surgeries over the last 15 years. When in pain, you will do anything to not have to feel uncomfortable, but does that mean we should take a substance that has no formal studies or long term effect information? Should we allow these individuals to take a substance that has a high potential for abuse and could easily become a popular recreational drug, if it is not already?

I have helped and been part of hundreds of persons seek recovery in many fashions. I have traveled into other states to speak and participate in recovery originated events, but in all my work and travels, I have yet to speak to an individual that has sustainable recovery or long term recovery from using Kratom. I am not a certified specialist or a clinician on addiction. I have no letters behind my name in any fashion, but what I do have is a livable experience and my passion and desire to affect change in others.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sean Nicholson".

Sean Nicholson

Director of Development

Phoenix Foundation of Maryland

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