

Jim Alvey
KRATOM Bill 1229
In Person/Written Testimony
3/26/2024

My name is Jim Alvey. I'm here in support of Bill 1229.

"Gas Station Heroin" - **Kratom, Tianeptine and Phenibut** - took over my son's life and caused his death at age 33. We must prevent this from happening to others, especially those under the age of 21.

This is James Alvey –

We called him "JT". He was a Spirit of Columbia scholarship winner and graduated with honors from University of NC (one of the happiest days of my life) and was accepted into Johns Hopkins School of Business. He had a successful IT career and was blessed with talent, intellect, looks, strength, and a heart of gold. He was and still is my pride and joy. His death broke many hearts. Over 250 family and friends attended his memorial.

But he suffered from anxiety and other behavioral challenges. He sought out products like **Kratom** to relieve stress without any legal consequences. He could buy it anywhere he wanted and as much as he wanted, so he did. From gas stations, convenience stores, and other retailers in Maryland.

Kratom seemed to help him (a little) at first. But he immediately started overdoing dosages to get more of a buzz and faster. When he was on it, it just gave him chills at first, but then shaky, jittery, jerky body movements and agitation. I called it "Kratom Crazy".

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I witnessed **anxiety, muscle aches, nausea, depression while on Kratom...** symptoms JT thought these drugs would help him with.

Websites and packaging claim Kratom treats anxiety and depression, increase energy levels, reduce pain, improve mental health conditions, provide feelings of pleasure or euphoria, and ease cravings for opiate drugs. Kratom has no confirmed medical use, which is why it is sold as a dietary supplement or as “test product”. However, we know that it does help SOME people trying to get off of harder drugs. Others are good about dosage and find it helps their anxiety. But Maryland has no age limit and does not control its sales.

You can drive almost anywhere in Maryland and see a sign saying, “We have Kratom!!” EXCEPT in **Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Vermont, and Wisconsin where is ILLEGAL to buy**. Eight other states have made it illegal for 18 and under, while 8 more have made it limited to 21 and over.

After one too many bad trips on Kratom, he entered his first rehab for drug addiction. But when he got out, he switched to other gas station heroin like Tianeptine and Phenibut and became even more addicted to those. He eventually died from withdrawal symptoms from those drugs.

\$5,000 (per the amended House Bill) for selling these drugs. \$5,000 vs. JT’s life hardly seems enough. But hopefully it will make it less popular to those selling it and put more controls around who can buy it legally.

We are in favor of this bill with its amendments.