



RHODE ISLAND MEDICAL SOCIETY

Chairperson Susan Donovan
House Health & Human Services Committee
Rhode Island House
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

2024-H 5565

OPPOSE

April 8, 2025

Dear Chairperson Donovan:

On behalf of the Rhode Island Medical Society (RIMS), we respectfully submit this testimony in strong opposition to legislation authorizing the distribution and regulation of Kratom in Rhode Island.

RIMS worked last year alongside the Rhode Island Department of Health, public health advocates, and addiction specialists to raise serious concerns about this bill. Those concerns ultimately led to the Governor's veto—a decision we supported and still believe was in the best interest of the public's health and safety. We urge the General Assembly to reconsider advancing this legislation in 2025.

Kratom is a substance with both opioid-like and stimulant properties. Its safety profile remains deeply questionable, with documented adverse effects including seizures, liver toxicity, and cases of dependency. The FDA has not approved Kratom for any medical use, and reputable studies on its efficacy are lacking. While the bill may aim to "protect" consumers, in reality, it risks lending a false sense of legitimacy to a substance that has not been adequately evaluated or regulated at the federal level.

Our primary concerns include:

- **Public Health Risk:** Kratom is associated with significant side effects and toxicity. Without rigorous oversight and regulatory enforcement, the bill creates a dangerous gray market.
- **Addiction Potential:** Kratom has well-documented opioid-like effects and carries the potential for misuse, dependency, and withdrawal. At a time when Rhode Island continues to battle an opioid crisis, we should not be introducing more unregulated substances into our communities.
- **Lack of Clinical Evidence:** There is insufficient scientific data supporting the safety or effectiveness of Kratom for any therapeutic use.

As physicians and healthcare leaders, we believe it is premature and potentially harmful to authorize the commercial sale of Kratom in Rhode Island. We ask the General Assembly to pause and allow for further federal review and peer-reviewed research before taking legislative action.

We respectfully urge you to vote NO on the Rhode Island Kratom Act and to continue placing the safety and well-being of Rhode Islanders first.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration. We are available to answer any questions or provide additional information.

Respectfully submitted,

Kara Stavros, MD
President