

## Written Testimony to Kansas State House Committee on Health and Human Services

Hello, my name is Aaron Roberts and I live in Wichita. My initial decision to attend this hearing and testify was to voice my vehement opposition to the addition of Kratom to the schedule I list. I remain strongly opposed, not just to a ban on Kratom, but more importantly the obscene waste of time, money and resources to ban a substance that helps thousands of people break free of opiate addiction. I'm sure that there will be a number of glowing personal accounts similar to my own experience with Kratom. I felt like it would be more productive to address the terminal fallacy that, paradoxically, is both glaringly obvious and conspicuously ignored.

The conversation we are having today is the latest remix of a conversation that has played out countless times in countless hearings pertaining to countless bills for decades. The fact that these discussions are being had but issues persist indicates to me that the actual problem isn't being addressed.

As elected representatives, the members of this institution are charged with making crucial decisions on behalf of your constituency. When you made the decision to campaign for office, you are telling your potential voters that you have the moral and political courage to act in the best interest of the people you represent and hold those interests paramount in the face of adversity and relentless opposition. Unfortunately, this courage is either exceedingly rare or exceptionally elusive where it should be abundant and on full display.

It is decades past time to acknowledge the absolute and undeniable failure of the 'War on Drugs' and we must open the dialogue about how to bring a quick and orderly end to what is objectively the most expensive policy failure in the history of human civilization. A fundamentally flawed policy is one thing. Another administration moves in, sees that not only has it not accomplished a single goal, but spent mind blowing amounts of money in the process. But this particular tumor seems not only immune to the consequences of unmitigated failure, but is invisible to lawmakers entirely which is inexplicable. I'm pretty confident that if I stacked trillions of dollars right outside and set it on fire, that would be the only thing anyone talked about for weeks. The War on Drugs has effectively done just that for over half a century and it seems like none of our lawmakers are aware of its existence. This decaying appendage should have been lopped off when after its first 8 years they had yielded nothing but terror on poor communities and couldn't point to a single solitary accomplishment.

I'm here to ask for any and all legislators who have managed to retain a spine and some dignity to muster the courage to force this conversation down the throats of lawmakers across the country and into the public sphere. What better place than here? What better time than now?