

Testimony Regarding HB 2706

House Federal and State Affairs Committee

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I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to present written only testimony in opposition to HB 2706. Our office believes that the current version of the bill would allow Hemp growers to sell their product to unlicensed processors. Having unlicensed/non-approved processors trying to process Hemp would lead to an increase in fires and explosions in the state. The clandestine processing of Marijuana and Hemp has led to numerous explosions, fires and deaths across the country in recent years.

For a DIY set up for extraction, the process begins by packing dry plant product into an "extraction tube." That being normally a PVC type of pipe. The bottom cap has small holes drilled into it, and the upper cap has one hole to which the butane canister discharge nozzle will go into. This will allow butane to be pushed through the tube in a manner that contains the plant material yet allows the butane to escape. This butane is highly flammable and explosive. The flipping of a switch, or even static electricity can cause it to ignite, and an explosion can occur.

There is another way, called the closed-loop system, which does the same, but keeps the butane from being expelled. In theory, this type of system is safer to operate than others, however through the introduction of either human error or mechanical failure of the system components, explosions can occur.

When fire departments respond to these types of incidents and explosions, they almost always encounter a fire in progress with severe injuries, and/or deaths. There are other factors for the fire departments to consider such as fire intensity, possible structural compromise and potential for secondary explosion all caused by the chemicals in use during the extraction process. These added factors make the risk for the responders disproportionately high.

Without the proper licensing to ensure that the extractions are being done safely, and properly, we could be looking at the occurrence of explosions from extractions being a new and unneeded problem for the state fire service and local and state law enforcement. Law enforcement and fire officials in other states that are already dealing with this problem are calling it the "modern meth lab problem."