



Wisconsin Coalition
for Cannabis Reform

**Protecting Wisconsin Consumers: The Future of Hemp Regulation
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The Wisconsin Coalition for Cannabis Reform (WCCR) supports strong, hemp-specific consumer protections that include age verification, product testing, and accurate labeling. We oppose applying Wisconsin's alcohol distribution system to hemp because it raises costs and reduces consumer choice without improving safety.

Background

Today, Wisconsin consumers can walk into a convenience store, gas station, or smoke shop and buy a hemp product with no guarantee it's been tested for safety, no guarantee the label is accurate, and no guarantee a minor wasn't the one who bought it. Closing these gaps is why *how* the Legislature clarifies and strengthens hemp regulation matters as much as *whether* it does.

Wisconsin's hemp industry has grown through collaboration among farmers, manufacturers, distributors, retailers, and regulators to meet rising consumer demand. But growth without clear, enforceable standards puts consumers at risk.

WCCR is calling on the Legislature and the Governor to enact legislation in the first 100 days of the incoming administration that delivers needed consumer protections and regulatory clarity.

Two Approaches to Protecting Consumers

Effective consumer protection requires regulations that fit the marketplace they are intended to govern. The question before Wisconsin lawmakers is not whether hemp should be regulated, but which regulatory framework best protects consumers while allowing a responsible industry to thrive. Two legislative proposals offer fundamentally different answers to that question.

Approach 1: Hemp-specific consumer protection. Amend Wisconsin's existing hemp statute to mandate age verification, product testing, and accurate labeling, written to align with the ways in which hemp is produced and sold.

Approach 2: Applying alcohol's three-tier system to hemp. This is a model built for a different product and supply chain, intended to prevent monopolies and collect taxes. Applying it to hemp does not provide additional consumer protections beyond what Approach 1 delivers, but *would* result in:

- **Higher prices and fewer choices.** Mandatory distributor markups consolidate the market among fewer, larger players. This naturally favors larger, entrenched operators, to the detriment of small, local businesses across the state.
- **Less access in rural and small communities.** Closures and disrupted supply relationships hit small, local retailers hardest.
- **Economic damage.** Wisconsin's hemp industry supports 3,500 jobs and \$700 million in annual production. Consolidation and closures harm both, with no safety gain to show for it.

The three-tier path asks consumers to pay more and choose from less, without making products on the shelf any safer than amending Wisconsin's existing hemp statute.

Our Approach

WCCR supports a balanced, hemp-specific framework that protects consumers first and supports the farmers and businesses who serve them second.

Consumer Protections (our highest priority)

- Responsible retail practices, including age 21 verification in-person and online
- Product safety and testing standards
- Accurate, standardized labeling requirements
- Appropriate liability standards

Industry & Market Structure

- Taxation and enforcement mechanisms
- Licensing requirements
- A growers program supporting Wisconsin farmers

This framework delivers what consumers need: age checks, tested products, and honest labels, without forcing an ill-fitting model onto an industry it wasn't built for.

Bottom Line

Wisconsin consumers should be able to trust that hemp products are safe, accurately labeled, and kept out of the hands of minors. Hemp-specific regulation delivers that. Borrowing alcohol's framework doesn't add those protections. Instead, it narrows the market, raises prices, and hurts businesses without improving consumer safety.

Wisconsin should regulate it with a modern, hemp-specific framework that protects consumers while allowing a responsible industry to thrive.