

# End Kratom Addiction Founder Urges Virginia Leaders to Confront Growing Crisis

*Following a Virtual Town Hall and public address in Chesterfield, EKA founder Dean Francis exposed the "natural supplement" myth fueling kratom addiction.*

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The industry claims the leaf has a low risk of addiction. This lie rivals the marketing of 'safe, natural' supplements, while thousands suffer the reality of opioid-like withdrawal."

*Dean Francis, President of EKA*

(EKA), a Virginia-based nonprofit, recently concluded a series of public awareness events aimed at exposing the dangers of kratom and the misleading marketing tactics used by the industry. The events, which included a Virtual Town Hall and a formal address to local government, marked a turning point for the organization in its mission to protect families from a crisis often hidden in plain sight.

Founded by Dean Francis, a Virginia father whose family has been directly impacted by the substance, EKA was

established to challenge the narrative that kratom is a harmless "herbal supplement." During the events, Francis detailed how the industry downplays the substance's opioid-like effects and its severe potential for addiction, risks his own family learned through a "nightmare journey."

On Wednesday, December 17, Francis addressed the Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors, sharing the story of his son, Cameron, to sound the alarm for local leaders. He pointedly addressed the industry's claim that kratom leaf has a low risk of addiction, noting that this "lie" rivals the marketing of other substances that have fueled the national opioid crisis.

"The kratom industry hates my son's story because it has nothing to do with extracts or liquid shots," said Dean Francis, President of End Kratom Addiction. "His addiction, like many people, was strictly the 'kratom leaf' in powder form. When the industry tries to dismiss these stories by calling the user 'abusive' or suggesting the product was 'adulterated,' it's just another excuse. Cameron is now among tens of thousands in recovery who were blindsided by the claim that this was a safe, natural plant."

The week's initiatives also included a Virtual Town Hall co-hosted by Richmond radio personality Mike King. The session featured testimony from impacted families and recovery experts who discussed how kratom is sold casually in gas stations and convenience stores, often positioned

next to energy drinks and snacks.

Through these events, EKA highlighted three primary areas of concern:

— Exposing the "Natural" Marketing Myth: EKA is working to educate the public that "natural" does not mean "safe." By highlighting the pharmacological reality of how kratom acts on opioid receptors, the organization aims to prevent more families from being misled by deceptive labeling.

— Advocating for State-Level Safety Measures: Francis urged the Board of Supervisors and state lawmakers to move beyond the status quo. EKA is calling for stricter regulations on how these products are sold and marketed in Virginia to prevent youth access and ensure transparent warnings.

— Building a Community for Recovery: With tens of thousands of individuals already struggling with kratom dependence, EKA is shining a light on the massive online communities supporting those in withdrawal, providing a voice for those who have felt isolated by the "herbal" stigma.

“Our goal is to pull back the curtain,” Francis emphasized. “The current system is insidious. Products are sold casually while families are left to deal with the fallout of addiction, withdrawal, and sometimes death. We will not stay silent while more families are blindsided.”

#### ABOUT END KRATOM ADDICTION:

End Kratom Addiction is a Virginia-based nonprofit organization founded by families impacted by kratom addiction. The organization exists to raise awareness of kratom's risks, advocate for honest and transparent information, and support laws that protect consumers, especially youth, from misleading marketing and unsafe access.

Dean Francis

End Kratom Addiction

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