



Press Releases

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ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN'S PROPOSAL TO COMBAT SYNTHETIC DRUGS CLEARS HOUSE COMMITTEE

Springfield — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced that the House Judiciary Criminal Law Committee unanimously sent to the full House an amendment to the Illinois Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act that will help address the synthetic drug epidemic in the state.

"Drug makers' continued attempts to sell synthetic drugs jeopardize the lives of teens and young adults," Madigan said. "This bill recognizes that chemicals sold to be taken as drugs, regardless of what they're called or their bogus labeling, are life threatening and illegal."

Madigan said combating the synthetic drug epidemic presents unique challenges for law enforcement and prosecutors because the chemical makeup of the products can be easily altered by manufacturers to avoid violating the Illinois Controlled Substances Act. In addition, these drugs are sold in packages that misleadingly claim the products are legal as confirmed by so-called "official" lab results.

House Bill 5233, which is sponsored in the House by Rep. Jerry Costello II (D-Smithton) and was crafted by Attorney General Madigan's office, defines a "synthetic drug product" as one that contains a controlled substance not regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The bill makes it illegal under the Illinois Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act to sell these drugs or to falsely advertise a synthetic drug product.

"Illinois faces a severe challenge in combating synthetic drugs because of enterprising retailers and drug makers who try to get around every law we pass," Rep. Costello said. "This new legislation gets to the heart of the problem by going after those involved in making and distributing constantly evolving drug concoctions. As a former police officer who has taken part in undercover drug busts, I know the toll synthetic drugs are taking in our communities, and this legislation is another strong step in the right direction."

Synthetic drug use is dramatically rising across the country. In 2010, Poison Control Centers nationwide received 2,915 calls related to synthetic marijuana use. That figure jumped to 6,890 calls in 2011. Reports of "bath salts," another type of synthetic drug that mimics the effects of cocaine or methamphetamine, were made 303 times to Poison Control Centers in 2010. A year later, the centers received 6,072 calls about bath salts.

Attorney General Madigan and Rep. Costello said adoption of HB 5233 will:

- Amend the definition of a "drug" in the Illinois Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act to define a "synthetic drug product" as a product that contains a controlled substance;
- Criminalize the distribution of or possession with intent to distribute a synthetic drug product or a drug with a false and misleading label as a Class 2 felony and a Class 1 felony for additional violations;
- Criminalize the false advertisement of a synthetic drug product as a Class 3 felony; and
- Add pentedrone to the list of Schedule 1 controlled substances. Pentedrone is a substance used in some bath salts, which are synthetic drugs that mimic the effect of cocaine.

Attorney General Madigan has been a leader in mobilizing Illinois law enforcement in addressing the dangers of synthetic drugs. In November 2011, Madigan hosted the first statewide summit of police, prosecutors, community leaders, educators and health care providers to examine efforts to deal with the increasing use of synthetic drugs, particularly among teens and young adults. Her office also has been leading a series of synthetic drug busts in coordination with local and county law enforcement officers at retail stores throughout the state.

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