



Wisconsin Prevention Network

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April 8, 2011

Representative Garey Bies, Chair
Committee on Criminal Justice and Corrections
Room 216 North
State Capitol
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Representative Bies:

On behalf of the Wisconsin Prevention Network (WPN), I am writing in regard to AB 57, which identifies several substances that are commonly known as “synthetic cannabinoids,” as well as two stimulant substances found in products promoted as “bath salts,” and classifies them as Schedule I controlled substances. WPN urges the Committee on Criminal Justice and Corrections to consider the following information as it begins deliberation on this bill.

On March 28th, the American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC) reported, “Synthetic marijuana products being sold at gas stations, convenience stores and ‘head shops’ have spurred more than 4,000 calls to U.S. poison centers since 2010, causing increased concern among doctors and clinicians as well as state lawmakers, who are quickly moving to outlaw such products.” Over 1,200 of these calls occurred within the first three months of this year.

These alarming figures prompted action by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) who exercised its emergency scheduling authority to designate these synthetic cannabinoids as Schedule I substances. On March 1st, the DEA explained that the action was necessary to prevent an imminent threat to public health and safety, indicating that “over the past couple of years, smokeable herbal products marketed as being ‘legal’ and as providing a marijuana-like high, have become increasingly popular, particularly among teens and young adults.”

The DEA and AAPCC have also issued warnings about another group of products being sold legally as “bath salts” but being promoted online as a type of synthetic stimulant, or fake cocaine (www.kogged.com). On March 22, the AAPCC reported that there had been 1,241 calls related to “bath salts” to poison control centers so far in 2011, a significant jump from the 236 calls received in all of 2010. According to AAPCC, doctors and clinicians at U.S. poison centers have indicated that ingesting “bath salts,” containing synthetic stimulants, can cause chest pains, increased blood pressure, increased heart rate, agitation, hallucinations, extreme paranoia, and delusions.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to express our concern about the serious health threat these substances pose. We respectfully request that this letter be entered into the hearing record for AB 57. The Wisconsin Prevention Network is a voluntary, incorporated, non-profit organization consisting of professionals and interested persons from a variety of health and human service disciplines throughout the state. WPN members currently represent over 30 prevention areas. We would welcome any opportunity to speak with you or members of the Committee on this or any other proposal related to the prevention of mental, emotional, or behavioral health disorders.

Respectfully,

Chris Wardlow, WPN Chair
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