



**County
Health Officials
of New York**
Leading the way to healthier communities

SUPPORTS

A.3273 (Barclay) / S. 748 (Ritchie)

AN ACT to amend the public health law and penal law, in relation to synthetic cannabinoids

The New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) supports the above-referenced legislative proposal, which would amend the public health law to include synthetic cannabinoid and synthetic cannabinoid analog substances in the definitions of controlled substances. Further, this legislation would amend the penal law to include synthetic cannabinoid and synthetic cannabinoid analog as sub-definitions of marijuana. These amendments would make sale, possession and use of synthetic cannabinoids and synthetic cannabinoid analogs illegal in New York State.

These products are sold as incense, potpourri and other herbal mixtures in convenience stores, smoke shops and by online retailers, and are often labeled “not for human consumption” so that their true use is disguised. Although the both the New York State Commissioner of Health and the federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) invoked emergency powers to make the sale and distribution of these substances illegal, their use continues to pose a serious public health threat.

Individuals who use these substances report seeking a high similar to that of marijuana. However, users experience severe negative health consequences that do not occur with marijuana use, including acute renal failure, paranoid and violent behavior, increased heart rate, hypertension, seizures, and loss of consciousness. In recent years, there have been some deaths in New York State among users of these substances.

Many of these symptoms occur in adolescent and young adult users. Cases relating to synthetic cannabinoids rose significantly prior to the current ban on sales. For example, from January-February 2011, there were four calls relating to synthetic cannabinoids; for the same period in 2012, there were 72 calls. These substances are posing a national threat which is being seen in New York State at the local level.

NYSACHO supports this legislation as it would ban not only the sale and distribution, but also the use of both current substances and related future products created through changes in the chemical formulations with intent to skirt current law and regulation. This legislation would provide comprehensive protection from these products now and in the future, and would help protect the public health and safety of New York State residents.

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