

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Legislator Spencer Strengthens Law Against the Potent and Harmful Designer Drug K2

Hauppauge, NY – Legislator William R. Spencer, M.D. is proud to announce the passage of Introductory Resolution #1370, which further regulates synthetic cannabinoids and synthetic cocaine in Suffolk County, particularly synthetic marijuana (K-2 or Spice) and “bath salts”. The local law received the full support of the legislature at Tuesday night’s General Meeting. The potent drug has seen an uptick in communities throughout Suffolk County and is causing youth to end up in emergency rooms.

Legislator Spencer stated, “The use of these drugs have become more and more widespread, especially among young people. The local law is a needed measure to push-back on this dangerous trend and protect our youth from being lured into the tremendous risks posed by these toxic drugs.”

The inspiration for the bill came after a mother, Peggy Berdat of a teenager battling addiction to K2 came to Legislator Spencer with the challenges her daughter faced while using the harmful substance. Ms. Berdat reacted to the passage of the bill, “I have witnessed the devastation this drug will cause. K2 is destroying so many young people and their families. This new law will have a positive impact on our community and bring the desperately needed awareness to the issue. I am thankful to the legislature for passing the bill.”

Synthetic drugs can be more dangerous than traditional drugs because slight variations of the chemicals can have varied and unpredictable effects. Additionally, the chemical diversity of synthetic drugs makes them more difficult for hospitals to treat. Reactions to the drug range from psychosis to addiction, severe agitation or anxiety, muscle spasms, seizures, tremors, vomiting, racing heart rate, elevated blood pressure, paranoia, intense hallucinogenic and psychotic episodes, violent behavior, and suicidal thoughts.

“As someone who has made fighting substance abuse, particularly among youth, a cornerstone of my time in elected office, I am delighted to join Dr. Spencer in this effort,” said Legislator Tom Cilmi. “The unpredictability of immediate and long-term consequences of these synthetic drugs is frightening and too many of our young people are falling victim in a variety of ways. We must use every tool possible including education, enforcement, legislation and treatment, to combat substance abuse of all kinds.”

In 2015, New York State ranked highest with the most calls about synthetic marijuana received by poison control centers around the country and accounted for 22.2% of all calls to US poison control centers. IR #1370 builds on Suffolk County's 2010 legislation which prohibited the sale of synthetic cannabinoids. The strengthened local law added provisions making it unlawful to possess with intent to sell or manufacture any synthetic cannabinoids or analogues. Adding the analogues was critical as the chemical compounds are constantly changing to elude local laws. In addition to the criminal penalty imposed, violators of the law are liable for a civil penalty of up to \$10,000.

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