



BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT

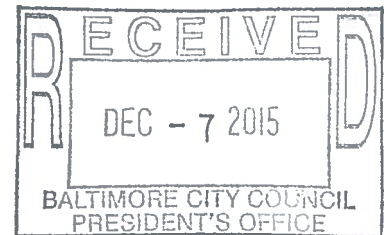


Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor

Kevin Davis
Police Commissioner

December 4, 2015

Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
Room 400, City Hall
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202



Attention: Natawna Austin, Executive Secretary

**Re: City Council Bill No. 15-0584
Psychoactive Substances**

Dear Council President Young and Members of the City Council:

The Baltimore Police Department (BPD or the Department) has reviewed Council Bill 15-0584. This bill prohibits the distribution of psychoactive substances, commonly referred to as synthetic drugs. Synthetic drugs are being seen more frequently in Baltimore City, and are often packaged and marketed to appeal to young adults. These products pose both a public health and public safety risk to the Baltimore community, and therefore the BPD takes a favorable position on this bill.

Synthetic cannabinoids, often referred to as “Spice” or “K2”, are mixtures of herbs and spices that have been sprayed with a synthetic compound chemically similar to THC, the active ingredient in marijuana. These products are often for sale at retail outlets, and the packaging is often targeted to appeal to young adults. Furthermore, these products are often marketed as safe and legal alternatives to street drugs and marijuana. However, these products can have a variety of effects on people that present both a public health and public safety risk, including paranoia, panic attacks, increased heart rate and increased blood pressure, agitation, anxiety, nausea, vomiting, seizures, hallucinations, and other effects. Synthetic cathinones, also known as “bath salts”, simulate the effect of amphetamines. These substances also have adverse psychological and physiological effects, and users have reported impaired perception of reality, reduced motor control, and decreased ability to think clearly.

While there is not reliable data on the presence of these drugs in Baltimore, it is believed that distribution and use of these drugs is on the rise. Anecdotally, these substances are being encountered more frequently by patrol officers. Several dozen synthetic drugs have been tested by BPD’s crime lab in each of the last several years, indicating these substances are present in the City. Additionally, emergency rooms are reporting a noticeable increase in the number of people coming to the ER as a result of synthetic drug use.

This bill provides civil and administrative penalties against those who distribute these products. The bill also provides a fine up to \$1,000 per package for distributing synthetic drugs. This bill places primary enforcement authority with the Health Department, but the BPD is prepared to be a partner in the effort to eradicate these dangerous substances from the streets of Baltimore.

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment. The Department looks forward to working with the City Council on this matter.

Sincerely,



Andrew G. Vetter
Director of Government Affairs