



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Middleton

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Request for State Legislation - Statewide Ban of Certain Synthetic Products

FOR the purpose of respectfully requesting the Honorable Chairs and Members of the Baltimore City Senate and House Delegations to the 2011 Session of the Maryland General Assembly to sponsor and secure the adoption of legislation to prohibit the distribution, use, purchase, or possession of synthetic cannabinoid drugs in the State of Maryland.

Recitals

The 2008 Annual Report of the National Forensic Laboratory Information of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) reports that “smokable herbal blends marketed as ‘legal marijuana’ have become increasingly popular. In the United States, these products can be purchased over the Internet from domestic or overseas-based businesses. The products purportedly consist of blends of exotic herbs and other plant material that when smoked allegedly produce euphoria. One particular brand of ‘herbal incense’ that has become increasingly popular is manufactured under the brand-name Spice.”

The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) reports that these synthetic cannabinoids are similar to THC -the active ingredient in marijuana- that, when smoked or ingested, can produce a similar high. Initially developed for research related to treatment of pain and the effects of cannabis on the brain, these substances have become a popular alternative to marijuana. When sprayed on dried herbs, the substances are marketed under names such as “Spice”, “k2”, or “Genie” and are sold legally in local convenience stores or on the internet.

As of September 2010, the DEA identified 5 “spice cannabinoids - CP47,497; HU-210; HU-211; JWH-018; and JWH-073 - as drugs of concern. It estimates the effect of smoking these substances as 10 to 15 times stronger than marijuana, with side effects including nausea, vomiting, fast heartbeat, hallucinations, and muscle spasms. Except for HU-210, no synthetic drugs currently are controlled under the Federal Controlled Substances Act. NCSL reports that state lawmakers are acting quickly to curb the growing availability and use of these substances by passing laws to designate certain synthetic cannabinoids as Schedule I controlled substances and to outlaw their possession or distribution.

According to the American Association of Poison Control Centers' National Poison Data System (NPDS), synthetic marijuana products, marketed under product names including "Spice", "K2", "Genie", "Yucatan Fire", "Sence", "Smoke", "Skunk", and "Zohia, being sold at gas stations, convenience stores and headshops, have spurred more than 1,500 calls to U.S. poison centers this year alone, causing increased concern among doctors and clinicians as well as state lawmakers, who are quickly moving to outlaw such products.

On October 4, 2010, the Baltimore County Council voted unanimously to ban certain synthetic drugs. The legislation was introduced after the sponsor found that such drugs were being sold in Catonsville, with sales reaching as much as \$5,000 a week - Baltimore Police found that the product sells for approximately \$20 a gram - nearly six times the price of marijuana.

Officials of Baltimore Substance Abuse Systems (bSAS), the designated substance abuse treatment and prevention authority for Baltimore City, advise that K2, Spice and other synthetic cannabinoids are an "emerging" drug problem in Baltimore City. It stands to reason that Baltimore County's ban will result in an increased monetary incentive for drug dealers to provide these substances not only to Baltimore City's drug users but to Baltimore County's as well. In a city already inundated with drugs and drug-related crime, it is imperative that the ban be extended to the City and to the entire State of Maryland.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Honorable Chairs and Members of the Baltimore City Senate and House Delegations to the 2011 Session of the Maryland General Assembly are respectfully requested to sponsor and secure the adoption of legislation to prohibit the distribution, use, purchase or possession of synthetic cannabinoid drugs in the State of Maryland.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this Resolution be presented to the Honorable Chairs and Members of Baltimore City's Senate and House Delegations to the 2011 Session of General Assembly when it reconvenes on January 12, 2011.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Commissioner of Health, the President of bSAS, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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