

Advisory Board on Alcoholism
and Drug Abuse



Alaska Mental Health Board

ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH BOARD
ADVISORY BOARD ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE
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February 3, 2011

Senator Kevin Meyer
Alaska State Legislature
Capitol Building, Room 103
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: SB 17 – Regulation of Synthetic Cannabinoids

Dear Senator Meyer,

On behalf of the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, I would like to express our thanks for your efforts to regulate synthetic marijuana or “cannabinoids.” These products pose a grave risk to youth and adults, causing serious health consequences and impairments to users of these drugs.

The dangers posed by synthetic marijuana are serious. While the base products may be natural, the chemicals used to mimic the properties of THC are not approved for human consumption. National news reports on the effects of these products include elevated heart rate and blood pressure, extreme anxiety, poisoning, nausea and vomiting, hallucinations, overdoses, and even addiction.

The American Association of Poison Control Centers reported more than 3,000 calls related to poisoning by synthetic marijuana products in 2010 – and nearly 400 calls since January 1 of this year. The U.S. Army banned use of synthetic marijuana by service members in August 2010. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) exercised its emergency scheduling authority to **temporarily** control five chemicals used in synthetic marijuana products (JWH-018, JWH-073, JWH-200, CP-47,497, and cannabicyclohexanol). This federal regulation is limited in duration (12-18 months), leaving Alaskans at risk after that time without the state taking action.

The effects of synthetic marijuana are being felt right here in Alaska. News reports of crimes involving these products have come from Fairbanks and Anchorage. The U.S. Army reported courts martial and non-judicial discipline of more than thirty soldiers in Alaska by December 2010. The Anchorage School District reports situations requiring medical care due to use by students (though not to the same extent as actual marijuana).

Given the health consequences and the role synthetic marijuana can play in criminal activity, there is a more than adequate basis for the regulation of these products to protect the health and safety of Alaskans. Thank you for your work to protect Alaskans from these harmful products.

Sincerely,

J. Kate Burkhart
Executive Director