

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE



Office of the Mayor

Mayor Dan Sullivan

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March 7, 2014

The Honorable John Coghill
Capitol Building, Room
Juneau, Alaska 99501

Dear Senator Coghill,

I would like to start by extending my appreciation for your committee's consideration of SB 173, *An Act relating to prohibition on the offer, display, marketing, advertising for sale of illicit synthetic drugs*. The Municipality of Anchorage supports Senator Meyer's efforts in designating "spice" as an illegal synthetic drug and outlawing its possession, marketing and sale in Alaska.

Synthetic substances sold openly in retail establishments has been a problem for Anchorage in the past. Our community was paying a steep price in ambulance runs, hospital bills, serious injuries and death from citizens ingesting these substances. Manufacturers were staying ahead of controlled substance laws by changing the chemical makeup of the drug; this left our police department with no tools for enforcement.

In response to this ongoing problem, the Anchorage Assembly passed an ordinance (AMC 8.35.500) that provides our local law enforcement the ability to issue financial penalties for the sale, possession and distribution of these substances, per packet. This penalty can be issued to both sellers and users. The passage of this ordinance has resulted in the products disappearing from the store shelves in Anchorage. On January 31, officers visited more than twenty of the twenty-three retailers who formerly sold the drugs and could not find a single packet in any store.

In other communities across the state, synthetic drug manufacturers are continuing to target young people who assume that because the substances are professionally packaged and can be bought in a store, that they must be safe. Members of the public testified before the Anchorage Assembly that these drugs are dangerous and unreliable, producing an unprecedented level of violence and mayhem in users and abusers.

SB 173 provides a new approach for State law enforcement by enabling rural communities like Little Diomed, who have been plagued with spice-related problems, to have a tool to address the open use of these dangerous substances. The Municipality of

Anchorage is hopeful that other communities in Alaska are able to join together in renouncing these unregulated substances that cause so much harm and have no legitimate use. SB 173 will enable communities across the state to call these substances what they really are: drugs that harm our youth and communities.

Again, I appreciate your committee and their consideration of this important piece of legislation. I urge your support and hope to see an end to the sale and use of these dangerous synthetic drugs.

Sincerely,



Dan Sullivan
Mayor