

Synthetic Drugs Pose Danger

by Mike Nofs, State Senator, 19th District

In 2010, the Michigan legislature passed a package of bills to classify new designer drugs - synthetic substances which seek to mimic the effects of illegal drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, and ecstasy – as Schedule I substances. The legislation also addressed the hallucinogenic variety of salvia, which was recently brought into public view by the antics of pop singer Miley Cyrus in her now infamous internet video.

Prior to these laws going into effect, these substances were sold openly in convenience stores, smoke shops and other retail outlets under trade names like K-2 and Spice. Some of you may also have read about the latest substance known as “bath salts”, which is a synthetic form of meth. Ironically, packaging for these substances clearly states that they are not intended for human consumption. The reason is that they were developed by drug industry chemists as research compounds designed to be used in the testing and development of other drugs. The compounds themselves were never intended to be ingested directly by humans.

Some have suggested that these substances pose little threat and that government is incapable of staying ahead of these new designer drugs, so what’s the point. The fact is, these substances are dangerous, as evidenced by the increasing number of young people showing up in emergency rooms across the state after ingesting them. The active ingredients in these compounds can be anywhere from 100 to 800 times more potent than the drugs they were intended to mimic, which can lead to serious side effects including increased blood pressure, racing heartbeat and tremors, as well as an intense and extended period of withdrawal.

As a career law enforcement officer, I have never quite understood the fascination behind taking substances that are potentially dangerous, or even fatal, and ingesting them in order to get high. And I probably never will. But as a policy maker, what I do understand is the staggering toll this scourge is taking on our society. From broken families, to increased crime, to the escalating impact on our health care system, I’ve seen first-hand the devastating consequences of substance abuse.

The truth is, these substances offer nothing positive for our youth, our families, or our state, and I stand behind the decision to classify them as Schedule I drugs here in Michigan. I encourage parents to talk with their kids about these and other drugs and to contact your local law enforcement if you come across any of these substances at a local retailer.