



March 6, 2018

K2 Has No Place In Our Communities

We held a press conference on February 26, 2018 including community partners Westside Health Authority, Habilitative Systems, Inc. (HSI), Garfield Park Chamber of Commerce, Bobby E. Wright Comprehensive Behavioral Health Center, Chicago Police Department and Hartgrove Hospital, calling for the end of gas stations and local stores selling the synthetic cannabis K2.

Synthetic cannabis goes by hundreds of names: K2, Spice, fake weed, Yucatan Fire, Bliss, Blaze, Skunk, Moon Rocks, and JWH-018 or JWH-073. However, synthetic cannabis, unlike pot, can cause a huge variety of symptoms, which can be severe, including: agitation, vomiting, hallucinations, paranoia, tremor, seizures, rapid heart rate, low potassium levels, chest pain, cardiac problems, stroke, kidney damage, acute psychosis, brain damage, and death.

According to Dr. Jeff Lapoint, an emergency doctor and toxicologist, “People think ‘oh it’s just weed, just fake marijuana.’ Clearly the safety perception is way off. Let parents know, let kids know – *this is not the same thing*. You are experimenting with unknown compounds. You’re being a guinea pig. It’s not the same chemical, even among same brand. Medically, these drugs are a world of difference from THC.”

K2 is currently illegal in Illinois, but yet the drug is still sold out of neighborhood gas stations and stores. K2 is known for causing erratic behavior in those who take it. It is important that we explain the dangers of drugs such as K2 to the community and work on solutions to prevent the sale of these type of drugs in our neighborhoods. It’s illegal to sell but it’s being sold to teenagers. This drug is dangerous, and if caught with it is a felony punishable with a sentence of 1-3 years.

In 2016, the synthetic marijuana K2 became illegal. It is currently against the law to distribute or manufacture this synthetic drug. Quiwana Bell, COO of Westside Health Authority is also in the fight to bring attention and advocacy around the issue of K2 that has become an increasing problem in Chicago.

“We, at the Westside Health Authority, continue to see the devastating effects that the illegal sale of K2 by local gas stations has caused on the young men and women on the West Side,” said Bell. “Many youths have become severely addicted to this substance—often causing them to exhibit extremely volatile and violent behavior. I am appalled that any store that wants to do business in our community has the gall to sell this stuff to our kids. They need to be stopped and held accountable for breaking the law.”

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, sweeping initial 'L' followed by a series of connected loops and a final horizontal stroke.

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District