

CITY OF BALTIMORE

STEPHANIE RAWLINGS-BLAKE, Mayor



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Leana S. Wen, M.D., M.Sc., FAAEM
Commissioner of Health
1001 E. Fayette St.
Baltimore, MD 21202
health.commissioner@baltimorecity.gov
Tel: 410-396-4387

October 15, 2015

Dear Baltimore City Retailer,

We need your help! Baltimore City Emergency Departments are reporting a marked increase in visits due to overdoses on **synthetic drugs**. These are mostly young people who come in completely unresponsive and are increasingly dying from symptoms related to these drugs. We need your commitment not to sell these dangerous, illegal products in your stores.

Marketed as safe alternatives to illicit drugs, these products often contain untested chemical compounds that can have devastating effects on users. Most popularly known as K2, Spice, or Bath Salts, these products are illegal in the State of Maryland but, due to the complex chemical nature of the product, enforcement is often challenging. Producers can quickly change the chemical compounds and the exterior packaging to avoid prosecution.

We are increasing our authority to impose stiff penalties on those who ignore the law and continue to sell these products to the public. Currently, the Health Department is presenting a bill to the City Council that would prohibit the distribution of synthetic drugs by all licensees of the health department. Violations could result in \$1,000 fines per package and potentially the suspension or termination of the license. Rather than fine and punish businesses, however, we want your commitment up front to voluntarily not sell these products.

We would love to have your support to show our communities that we stand united against synthetic drugs that are harming our children and our city. **Please visit our webpage and sign the online petition in support of banning synthetic drugs in Baltimore. Sign the pledge on behalf of your business at <http://health.baltimorecity.gov/syntheticdrugban> and post the enclosed “Not A Drug Dealer” sign in your store.** Signing the pledge and posting the sign are entirely voluntary but it will show the public that you are a business leader, committed to keeping drugs out of our community.

Thank you in advance for your support and help in our fight to protect Baltimore City residents, from the dangers of synthetic drugs. Together we will keep our city healthy and safe.

Sincerely,

Leana Wen, M.D. M.Sc.
Commissioner of Health