



News Release

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Huffman Files Comprehensive Legislation to Help Law Enforcement Keep Dangerous Synthetic Drugs off Texas Streets

AUSTIN—Senator Joan Huffman, R-Houston, filed two bills today to give law enforcement additional tools in the ongoing battle to protect public health and safety against the production and sale of dangerous designer drugs known as K2 and 25I. Texas poison centers received 470 exposure calls on K-2 last year. 25I has been blamed for the recent deaths of two young Houston residents.

Senate Bill 263 makes illegal several new chemical compounds of synthetic cannabinoids created since K2 was banned in Texas in 2011. What's more, the legislation enables law enforcement to keep up with street chemists who alter the chemical compounds to skirt existing drug laws and put them on the streets faster than they can be banned.

“Designer drugs are a growing threat to health and public safety that have already harmed many families and individuals—a significant number of whom are young people,” Huffman said. “SB 263 was crafted using the input of chemists, prosecutors, and police who fight to keep these dangerous substances off the streets each day. It's also intended to further strengthen the existing law.”

SB 263 also allows for the prosecution of drug cases where the chemical structure is the same as K2 or is intended to have the same physical and psychological effects.

Senate Bill 264 bans the new designer drug 25I, making it a felony to possess, manufacture or sell. 25I is a synthetic chemical substance that acts as a psychedelic, similar to LSD and ecstasy. Authorities believe 25I is what killed a 21-year-old and a teenager in Houston last year. The drug is usually found online, where it's sold as a "research chemical."

"Many young people in Texas mistakenly believe designer drugs are safe because they're sold in stores and on the Internet," Huffman said. "In fact, there is no beneficial or legitimate use for these products and they can cause life-threatening symptoms or death to those who use them."

Lt. Gray Smith from the Narcotics Division of the Houston Police Department, who has extensive experience dealing with the challenges associated with synthetic drugs, said his department supports the passage of Huffman's bills.

"Houston and the surrounding Gulf Coast Region have seen significant production, distribution and consumer sales of these substances which have caused so much harm nationally," Smith said. "These bills will allow for the closer coordination between the police, crime labs and the courts and aid in bringing criminal prosecutions regarding these substances to a successful conclusion."

Senator Joan Huffman represents District 17, which comprises Brazoria, Fort Bend and Harris counties. Huffman currently serves as chairwoman of the Texas Senate Republican Caucus and as vice chairwoman of the Senate Criminal Justice Committee. She is a member of the Finance, State Affairs, and Health and Human Services Committees, as well as the Sunset Advisory Commission. Huffman and her family reside in Houston.

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