

# GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

## OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

[oag.dc.gov](http://oag.dc.gov)



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** Thursday, November 19, 2015

**Contact:** Rob Marus, Communications Director (OAG): 202.724.5646; [robert.marus@dc.gov](mailto:robert.marus@dc.gov)

## OAG Introduces Legislation that Would Give the District Some of the Most Comprehensive Synthetic-Drug Laws in the Nation

*SAFE DC Act Gives Law Enforcement Better Tools for Prosecuting and Testing Dangerous Drugs*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – The Office of the Attorney General has introduced proposed legislation that would constitute one of the nation’s most comprehensive synthetic drug statutes. In an effort to be at the forefront in the ongoing struggle between law enforcement and manufacturers of synthetic cannabinoids and synthetic cathinones, the Synthetics Abatement and Full Enforcement Drug Control Act of 2015 (“SAFE DC”) incorporates best practices in enforcement from multiple jurisdictions around the nation.

**“This bill will help the District lead the way in fighting these dangerous drugs, which are increasingly creating major difficulties for law enforcement and emergency personnel nationwide,”** Attorney General Karl A. Racine said. **“Synthetic drugs can induce immediate, psychotic and deadly reactions, and we must improve the legal tools we have to fight this drug so our communities and our children will be safe.”**

Synthetic cannabinoids (often known by street or brand names like “Bizarro” and “Scooby Snax”) and synthetic cathinones (known by street or brand names like “Flakka” and “bath salts”) are manufactured compounds designed to alter the state of the user. However, they are illegal and often contain untested chemicals that can induce dangerous and even deadly effects in users.

SAFE DC strengthens law enforcement officials’ ability to test for and prosecute cases against sellers and distributors of synthetic cannabinoids and synthetic cathinones. The bill achieves this by adding the drugs to the District’s schedule for controlled substances based on the *class* of the chemical compounds contained in the drugs rather than the *individual* compound found in a particular substance. Classifying new substances based on the class of the compound solves three problems that have confronted law enforcement across the nation in fighting synthetics:

1. It minimizes the necessity of enumerating specific synthetic drug compounds on Schedule I of the District of Columbia’s Controlled Substances List;

2. It makes laboratory testing for synthetic cannabinoids and synthetic cathinones more efficient; and,
3. It ensures that law enforcement will no longer need to rely on an impractical controlled-substances-analogue statute to prosecute emerging synthetic drugs.

Additionally, the legislation codifies certain District of Columbia Department of Health synthetic cannabinoid and cathinone regulations.

The legislation is the result of collaboration between the Office of the Attorney General's Emerging Drug Trends Task Force and the District's Department of Forensic Sciences (DFS). **"I want to thank Dr. Jenifer Smith, the DFS Director, as well as Dr. Luke Short, Manager of the DFS Biomonitoring and Analytical Chemistry Unit, for their work to help us propose this legislation,"** Attorney General Racine said. **"Bringing an end to the problem of synthetic drugs requires cooperation across agencies and jurisdictions, and I'm glad to have DFS as a partner in this fight."**

For more information on the OAG Emerging Drug Trends Task Force, see:

<http://oag.dc.gov/release/oag-fights-trends-heroin-and-other-dangerous-drugs-through-local-regional-task-forces>.

###