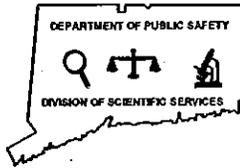




STATE OF CONNECTICUT



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

*John A. Danaher III
Commissioner*

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March 16, 2009

Rep. Michael P. Lawlor, Co-Chairman
Sen. Andrew J. McDonald, Co-Chairman
Judiciary Committee
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

SB 844 AN ACT CONCERNING METHAMPHETAMINES

The Department of Public Safety supports this bill.

The Department of Public Safety would like to thank Governor Rell for her proposal regarding methamphetamines.

Methamphetamine, or meth, is the most commonly abused type of amphetamine; its use has grown rapidly and spread across the country in recent years. Meth use can lead to anxiety, insomnia, convulsions, stroke, cardiac arrhythmia, paranoia, hallucinations and episodes of uncontrollable rage. In many areas of the country, meth use has reached epidemic proportions. The resources of local and state governments are being strained by efforts to deal with the physical, mental and social consequences of addiction to methamphetamine.

The Connecticut State Police have been aware of the methamphetamine threat for a number of years. The Statewide Narcotics Task Force has attended many training and awareness sessions in and out of the State of Connecticut and has presented numerous training and awareness sessions. We have watched and prepared as the threat has crossed the United States from the West Coast to the Northeast. While the rest of the country exploded with methamphetamine incidents, there were only small incidents in Connecticut until 2005, when four separate incidents occurred. A significant amount of meth was seized in the course of shipment through our state, while two meth labs in East Hampton and one small lab in New Fairfield were dismantled.

While the consensus of many who have addressed this issue is that an epidemic does not exist in Connecticut at the present time, steps such as those in this bill must be taken now to avert a potentially devastating problem in the not too distant future. In proposing this bill, Governor Rell has provided the framework to address this problem in Connecticut and prevent it from reaching epidemic proportions.

One factor that has led to the rise in use and popularity of methamphetamine is the fact that it can be easily manufactured in clandestine laboratories using readily-available ingredients, many of which can be found in household products. Paint thinner, drain cleaner, starter fluid, gasoline, match heads, antifreeze and lye contain some of the components that are "cooked" into an ingestible form for the user in a highly-volatile process that endangers the person performing it, anyone nearby, and the environment.

The key components in the manufacturing process of methamphetamine, however, are the drugs ephedrine, pseudoephedrine and phenylpropanolamine. These drugs can be extracted from many over-the-counter products, such as cold medicines, and are an essential part of the finished product. Because they do not require a prescription, access to these precursor drugs by meth manufacturers has been unrestricted. They are easily stolen, even in large quantities, from the shelves of drugstores where they sit unattended, or can simply be purchased in any amount desired.

This bill would provide a control procedure that has been used successfully in a number of other states. It would require drugstores and other retail sellers of drug products containing ephedrine, pseudoephedrine or phenylpropanolamine, to store such drug products in a location that is inaccessible to consumers, and require consumers to request and purchase the drug products at the counter.

The bill also requires maintenance a log book with signatures, names and addresses of purchasers and date of purchase and prohibits purchase of more than seven and one-half grams of any drug product or combination of drug products containing ephedrine, pseudoephedrine or phenylpropanolamine, or their salts, isomers or salts of isomers within any thirty-day period. The enactment of similar laws in other parts of the country has proven extremely effective, resulting in a dramatic decrease in incidents of meth labs.

The expansion of applicability of penalties in 21a-277 is specifically necessary to address the incidents of the manufacture of methamphetamine. Several of the processes include readily available household chemicals, which by themselves are useful for household purposes, but become dangerous and toxic agents when placed in solution or processed in methamphetamine production. Many of these chemicals and by-products present serious health risks to innocent children, families and communities through residential, ground and aquifer contamination. Collection, decontamination and remediation are expensive and extremely involved processes.

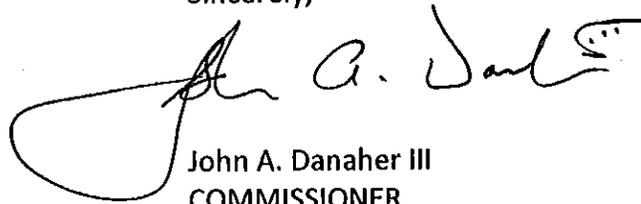
This bill proposes an increase in the penalties for operating a drug lab and the manufacture of methamphetamine at any stage. This increase is commensurate with the consequences of these crimes and is an integral part of our efforts to combat this issue before it becomes an epidemic.

The agency would suggest a technical change to the drafting of Section one of the bill, which amends Section 21a-240 of the general statutes by adding subsection (59) as noted below (changing 'or' to 'and'):

(NEW) (59) "Methamphetamine-type substances" means methamphetamine and structural analogues, including, but not limited to methylenedioxymethamphetamine and other substituted phenylethylamine compounds, their salts, isomers and salts of isomers and chemical compounds that are similar thereto in chemical structure [or] and that are similar thereto in physiological effect, and that show a like potential for abuse or that are controlled substances under this chapter, unless modified.

Leaving the word "or" opens the door for thousands of structurally unrelated compounds, many of which are legal medications (both OTC and prescription) that can produce symptoms identical to those caused by MDMA. If the definition is overly-inclusive, it fails to provide differentiation and specificity for the (target) amphetamine group.

Sincerely,



John A. Danaher III
COMMISSIONER
Department of Public Safety

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