

SENATOR ANDREA L. STILLMAN

Twentieth District

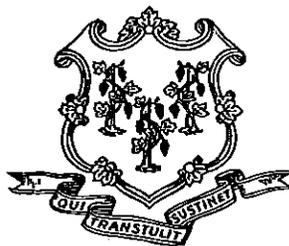
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Testimony in Support of SB 1098
March 14, 2011

Good morning, Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and all members who serve on the Judiciary Committee. I'm Andrea Stillman, state senator from the 20th District: I urge your support for and approval of SB1098, AN ACT REGULATING THE SALE AND POSSESSION OF SYNTHETIC MARIJUANA AND SALVIA DIVINORUM.

Based on law enforcement encounters, these substances are typically found laced on plant material. The plant material is packaged in small pouches or packets, and is being sold in tobacco and smoke shops, drug paraphernalia shops, gas stations, and convenience stores as herbal incense products, giving customers of all ages direct access to these substances. Research articles propose that the packaging is professional and conspicuous, targeting young people, possibly eager to use cannabis, but who are afraid of being caught with illicit drugs.

Fake marijuana products – often sold as K2 or Spice – can be from 5 to 25 times more potent than THC, the active ingredient in the real thing. Salvia Divinorum – often and commonly referred to as sage – is described by one nationally recognized expert in the field as 'the most potent naturally occurring hallucinogen.' Each of these products can powerfully *and dangerously* alter the perceptions and judgment of the user.

Frankly, it is counterintuitive – and bad public policy – to allow the legal sale of these products that seem deliberately intended to make an end-run around federal drug laws.

The federal government has responded, now our state government must follow suit. Earlier this month, the DEA used emergency authority to classify the chemicals used in synthetic marijuana as Schedule I controlled substances. HB1098 would similarly restrict the sale and use of these products – used to coat otherwise innocuous herbs to create K2 and Spice – in our state. As many as two dozen other states have enacted or are considering laws to do so – Connecticut should be the next to do so.

The use of Salvia Divinorum can alter the perception and judgment of the user and can cause 'profound' hallucinations. Sage affects receptors in the brain that are responsible for pain control and said to be responsible for some psychiatric disorders. It is most

commonly used by youth ages 18 – 25 and 6% of 12th graders nationally have to admitted to using it this past year.

Just last week a 21 year-old film student, who was under the influence of Salvia, jumped to his death from a 15th floor balcony. According to the girl he was with, “He just ran and hopped over the fence. He had no idea who he was, what he was doing.”

19 states have banned or restricted the distribution and sale of Salvia Divinorum or are at least considering doing so. Again, Connecticut must be on that list.

If one of our purposes in state government is to protect the public health and well-being of individual residents – particularly young people – our state must carefully scrutinize these products and their active ingredients and decide to classify them among other controlled substances.

Young people, commonly susceptible to peer pressure, trendy behavior, and who are not yet old enough to purchase alcohol legally, must not have ready access to these products.

Thank you very much and I urge your support.



Andrea L. Stillman
State Senator, 20th District