

SCHWARTZ, METZ & WISE, P.A.

ATTORNEYS

20 WEST STREET
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TEL: 410-244-7000

FAX: 410-269-5443

TO: The Honorable Joseph F. Vallario, Jr., Chairman
Members, House Judiciary Committee
The Honorable Galen Clagett

FROM: Joseph A. Schwartz, III
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise

DATE: February 26, 2013

RE: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT** – House Bill 851 – *Criminal Law* –
Synthetic Cannabinoids – Penalties

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the Maryland Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians, and the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics wish to voice their support for the above referenced bill which aims to codify “synthetic cannabinoids” to the State’s Schedule I controlled dangerous substances, add specific chemical substances that are considered cannabimimetic agents and adds synthetic cannabinoids to the criminal statute related to marijuana.

Synthetic cannabinoids are rapidly becoming a significant public health challenge. They are chemically engineered substances that are similar to the active ingredients in marijuana and produce a similar effect when smoked or ingested. They have become a popular alternative to marijuana, particularly with youth and have been linked to tachycardia, seizures, hallucinations and other responses commonly found with drug abuse.

Designation of these chemicals as Schedule I drugs will effectively ban them in Maryland as Schedule I drugs cannot be prescribed, manufactured, possessed, dispensed, imported, exported or sold. These substances have no safe use, present a high potential for drug abuse and should be banned from the marketplace.

It should be noted, however, that it is critical to achieving the objective of this bill to also include language in the law to address legitimate research being conducted on or with these chemicals. The research language that is included in House Bill 851 should be noted. Failure to include the proposed research language could inadvertently prohibit or negatively impact these research efforts.

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To that end, the Committee should verify that the proposed research language is drafted appropriately to ensure the objective of House Bill 851 does not create unintended consequences for legitimate research. The Committee is urged to work with those institutions that can properly craft the language to insure the intended objectives of the legislation are achieved. With the research issue noted, a favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

Joseph A. Schwartz, III
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
410-244-7000