



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Governor Signs Sen. Griffo's Legislation to Ban Sale of Powdered Alcohol in New York State

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO August 14, 2015

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UTICA – Legislation sponsored by Senator Joseph Griffo was signed into law today that would ban in New York State the sale of any powdered or crystalline alcohol products, commercially known as “Palcohol”.

Griffo, R-Rome, thanked the Governor for approving this legislation, which Griffo believes will help keep yet another potentially dangerous substance out of the hands of minors and other people who might abuse it. New York now joins several other states that have already passed similar legislation, including Alaska, Louisiana, South Carolina, Utah, Vermont, and Virginia.

Griffo said, "For every substance or drug that has been abused by people in our communities, we often look back and ask ourselves if there is anything we could have done differently to prevent a wave of addiction from reaching the point of no return. By now making it illegal to sell powdered alcohol in the state of New York, this law signed today gives us that rare proactive opportunity to avoid exposing our most vulnerable to one more substance that could have a detrimental impact on their lives."

Powdered alcohol – which has been marketed as “Palcohol” – is a powder that when mixed with 6 ounces of liquid, creates the equivalent of a standard mixed drink.

In 2014, the manufacturer of Palcohol sought federal approval to market their product. Earlier this year, the U.S. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) approved revised labels allowing the product to legally be sold in the United States, unless otherwise prohibited. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) concluded that the use of ingredients in Palcohol was in compliance with their regulations, and they did not, at that time, have legal basis to block this item from being sold.

This legislation was co-sponsored by Assemblyman Steve Cymbrowitz, D-Brooklyn.

Cymbrowitz said, "Powdered alcohol is a product with no legitimate reason for being. I'm pleased that New York has joined the growing number of states to ban the sale of this potentially dangerous product."

A serious risk with powdered alcohol is that multiple packets could be misused to form one single, possibly lethal drink, Griffo said. It could also increase the chances of underage drinking and substance abuse.

Griffo added, "We are all well aware of the unfortunate price that is paid when our children and our communities are gripped by substance abuse and addiction – promising lives are shattered, stable homes are turned upside down, and neighborhoods are left searching for solutions. So with that risk, there is absolutely no need whatsoever to introduce another form of alcohol that could only make it easier for minors to abuse."

The appeal this product might have for minors is particularly troubling to experts throughout Central New York who are focused on the prevention and treatment of

substance abuse – especially since powdered alcohol is so unfamiliar to youths and can easily be disguised by mixing it into otherwise harmless beverages, sodas or juices.

Cassandra Sheets, Licensed Master Social Worker and CEO at Center for Family Life and Recovery, Inc. in Utica, said she was pleased to hear that Governor Cuomo signed Senator Griffo's legislation to prohibit the sale of powdered alcohol.

"We already know that underage drinking is a problem, in fact according to the 2011 Oneida County Teen Assessment Project Survey Report, 51 percent of Oneida County's 7th, 9th, and 11th graders surveyed reported being regular users of alcohol; 35 percent of whom report to be binge drinkers," Sheets explained. "Research shows that alcohol is a gateway to other drug use and therefore we commend Governor Cuomo and Senator Griffo for their commitment to healthier communities."

Sheets added, "There are many dangers associated with Palcohol. Youth may abuse and misuse Palcohol, ultimately contributing to the prevalence of drug and alcohol issues in the community. Palcohol can very easily be mistaken for other powdered products such as Kool-Aid powder, which can confuse children due to its similar appearance. Youth may also disguise the powder in their drinks and possibly even their food; essentially putting themselves, or others, in great danger."

CFLR, Inc. welcomes community members to become active in the Oneida County Communities that Care Coalition to assist in educating others about the dangers of Palcohol and other drugs.

For more information, please contact Community Programs Director, Judith H. Reilly at 315-733-1709 or jreilly@cflrinc.org.

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