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Bill Tightening Penalties on Synthetic Drugs Passes Unanimously

House Bill 1186 has now passed House and Senate

(INDIANAPOLIS – March 27, 2019) – The Indiana Senate unanimously approved House Bill 1186 on Tuesday, 48-0, giving the state code a much needed update to deal effectively with synthetic drugs.

HB 1186, authored by Rep. Sharon Negele, R-Attica, and sponsored by Sen. Mike Bohacek, R-Michiana Shores, acknowledges and addresses the fact that synthetic, or lookalike drugs, have become a very real problem in Indiana.

“Synthetic substances, like spice or bath salts, are created to imitate other known illegal drugs, like marijuana or cocaine,” Negele said. “However, the synthetics can sometimes be more toxic and dangerous than the drugs they mimic. By strengthening penalties, we can get these criminals off the streets and help deter the manufacture of synthetic drugs.”

Under current Indiana law, synthetic drug offenses are currently classified as infractions or Class B misdemeanors. In recent years, synthetic drugs have increased in potency and are much more likely to be bought and abused in Indiana. Fentanyl analogs in particular are on the rise and are capable of causing severe harm and even death. HB 1186 changes the current classification and will ensure crimes involving synthetic or analog drugs are prosecuted the same way as the Schedule 1 drugs they are mimicking.

“In my district, I have worked with youths in the juvenile justice system and seen the dangerous effects of synthetic drugs,” Bohacek said. “This bill is necessary to ensure synthetic drugs are properly categorized as well as help combat drug use in our state. If signed into law, I believe this bill would help enhance the safety of Hoosiers and our local communities.”

HB 1186 is also a serious attempt at staunching the number of new drugs added to the code each year by criminalizing the analogs of already schedule controlled substances. Now, a person caught trafficking or abusing an analog of an already controlled substance would be prosecuted as if it was a controlled substance.

“House Bill 1186 ensures the traffickers of dangerous synthetic drugs are punished appropriately and will effectively curb the manufacture and distribution of these extremely harmful drugs,” said David Powell, executive director of the Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council. “We want to thank Rep. Negele and Sen. Bohacek for their work on this bill.”