



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

## Senator Griffo & Assemblyman Braunstein Unveil Anti-Bath Salts Bill to Toughen Penalties and Get Drugs Off the Market

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO August 6, 2012

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### **Senator Griffo and Assemblyman Braunstein Unveil Anti-Bath Salts Bill to Toughen Penalties and Get Drugs Off the Market**

State Senator Joseph A. Griffo (R/C/IP -Rome), supported by Assemblyman Edward C. Braunstein (D-Bayside), whose bipartisan leadership in the legislative effort to restrict the sale and use of drugs commonly called “bath salts” helped put New York ahead of the nation in cracking down on these dangerous drugs, have unveiled new legislation designed to meet the rising use of the drugs with legislation that will help protect the public. The legislation is also supported by Assemblyman Anthony J. Brindisi (D/WF/IP-Utica), in response to an escalation of bath salts use in his district.

“In 2011, we took a strong role to address the issue of these hallucinogenic drugs being sold in New York, and we passed a good law that Gov. Cuomo signed last July. However, what we are seeing in recent days is a dramatic upsurge in incidents in which the violent, bizarre behavior of individuals who have confronted the police is being linked to their use of these drugs. As such, I am going to be working with my partners in the Senate, Assembly and Governor’s office to pass legislation that will take stronger action, because I believe the response to what we are seeing is to take even stronger measures to protect families and our

law enforcement personnel,” Griffo said.

“Between the time we developed last year’s legislation and this summer, we have seen an explosion of synthetic drugs that are causing serious law enforcement, health and mental health problems for communities and families across New York State,” said Braunstein. “Our goal with this new legislation is to respond to the concerns addressed to us by law enforcement and develop a bill that will give them the tools needed to crack down harder in order to end the widespread misuse of these drugs.”

“One of the reasons the use of bath salts has skyrocketed in recent weeks is its easy availability,” said Assemblyman Anthony J. Brindisi (D/WF/IP-Utica.) “I am joining with Senator Griffo and Assemblyman Braunstein as a sponsor on this legislation, because I believe it will make it much more difficult for store owners to sell these products. When people use these drugs, they often become violent and irrational, and this has become a serious public safety issue. It is important that we get the message across to store owners and individuals that if they sell these products, they can face significant criminal penalties.”

The new bill would classify substituted cathinones (these products, often referred to as "bath salts", are chemically related to methamphetamines and ecstasy – which are both classified as stimulants) as Schedule I stimulant controlled substances and create a Statewide substituted Cathinone Surrender Program to allow for surrender of these harmful substances to appropriate authorities. Griffo noted that his initial legislation criminalized the sale of "bath salt" products containing Mephedrone and MDPV. Since then, a current practice of making minor alterations to chemicals to subvert statutes that prohibit distinct chemicals made it possible for slightly altered "bath salt" products to continue to be sold in New York State. Braunstein noted that in this new legislation, by adding substituted

cathinones to the CSA based on foundational chemical structures, this loophole of chemical alteration would be closed. Not only will this bill provide criminal sanctions, but also makes it a felony to sell such product to a minor or on school grounds

Senator Griffo praised Assemblyman Braunstein, who has sponsored previous bills on bath salts with him, and also Assemblyman Brindisi for his support for laws in response to the dangerous increase in bath salts use.

“There is a can-do spirit in Albany that says when there is a public safety priority to address, we work as partners and we move as fast as we can and we work as hard as we can to get results,” Griffo said. “Assemblyman Braunstein’s efforts will help make New York safer. I appreciate the partnership with Assemblyman Brindisi so that we can move this bill swiftly through both chambers when we return to Albany. Protecting the people knows no party lines.”

"I am proud to work together again with Senator Joseph A. Griffo, to pass this bill, which would strengthen our previous legislation by preventing drug dealers from evading the law by changing the chemical composition of 'bath salts.' These dangerous meth-like drugs have caused numerous violent and tragic incidents throughout the country and we must take stronger action against 'bath salts' in order to protect the public as well as law enforcement officers," Assemblyman Braunstein said.

According to UPSTATE Medical University and the Upstate New York Poison Center "bath salts" is a common term used for man-made stimulant (upper) drugs that are similar to "ICE" methamphetamine (or crystal meth). Since they are very similar to other stimulant (upper) drugs like meth (amphetamine), they are very dangerous when used. "Bath salts" can be

snorted, smoked, or even put in water and injected using a needle. They come in a variety of different and attractive packaging with enticing names like "Cloud Nine", "White Lightning." "Purple Rain", "Pixie Dust", and many more. These drugs stimulate the nervous system (brain) and the cardiac system (heart). Severe symptoms may occur including convulsions, seizures, chest pain, excessive sweating, hallucination, anger/violence, suicidal thoughts and action. The use of "bath salts" can cause heart attacks, permanent brain damage and scary hallucinations that can last for days or even weeks. Behavior can result in suicide or the harm to or killing of others. The Upstate New York Poison Center has received 198 cases of reported incidents related to "bath salts" so far in 2012. Central New York has been particularly hard hit, with Oneida County having 36 cases in 2012, as opposed to 8 in 2011; Onondaga County 35 (9 in 2011); Oswego County 17 Cases (10 in 2011); and Madison County having 15 cases (none in 2011).

Griffo said, "These so-called 'bath salts' are not the same as aromatic bath salts. They contain a potentially lethal mix of synthetic drugs and serve no purpose other than to get the user high. My legislation sought to ban these dangerous substances so we may help keep our young people safe and give our law enforcement the authority to rid our State of these dangerous drugs. What we are finding since the law took effect is that more action is needed because of the incidents taking place across Central New York."

Braunstein added: "Dangerous substances are being marketed under many names, but the result is the same – damaging effects to the user and potentially dangerous situations for the police and community. Our new bill will help to stop this epidemic."