U.S. Department of Justice
Drug Enforcement Administration

Office of the Administrator

Springfield, VA 22152

June 15, 2011

Howard K. Koh, M.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Secretary for Health
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Dr. Koh:

This letter serves as notification to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services of my intention to publish an order in the Federal Register temporarily placing 3,4-methylenedioxypyrovalerone (MDPV), 4-methyl-N-methylcathinone (mephedrone), and 3,4-methylenedioxy-N-methylcathinone (methylone) into schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) pursuant to the temporary scheduling provision of the CSA (21 U.S.C. § 811(h)).

These three synthetic cathinones have emerged on the designer drug market and have been promoted as legal alternatives to ecstasy, cocaine, amphetamine, and methamphetamine. In addition to reports of being abused alone, these substances have been found labeled as "bath salts" which are being sold at smoke shops, head shops, convenience stores, adult book stores, and gas stations. They can also be purchased on the Internet.

Based on reports from law enforcement encounters, the prevalence of these substances and associated products has recently increased and coincides with an increasing number of calls being received by U.S. poison control centers suggesting abuse has also increased. In 2009, the National Forensic Laboratory Information System (NFLIS) received 15 reports of analyzed seizures from eight states related to these substances. However, in 2010, there were 512 analyzed seizures from 26 states related to these substances reported to NFLIS. The American Association of Poison Control Centers reported that in 2010, poison control centers took 302 calls about synthetic cathinone products. As of April 20, 2011, poison control centers had received 1,782 calls relating to these substances for this year.

The abuse of these substances has resulted in emergency department admissions and has been implicated in the deaths of several individuals. The New Jersey Poison Information and Education System reported several incidents in which the ingestion of "bath salts" led to the emergency room admissions of numerous individuals. In many of these incidents the intoxicated individuals were aggressive, agitated, and confused and had to be sedated by emergency personnel until their symptoms were alleviated. Michigan reported several emergency room

visits of individuals who reportedly ingested "bath salts." These reports detail individuals abusing these substances either alone or in combination with other drugs of abuse by snorting, smoking, swallowing, or injecting the substance. Individuals abusing these substances have reported experiencing anxiety, agitation, paranoia, and delusions. Clinical features associated with synthetic cathinone abuse include dilated pupils, rapid heart rate, hypertension, rashes, bruxism, and sweating.

In accordance with the provisions of 21 U.S.C. § 811(h), I find that the scheduling of MDPV, mephedrone, and methylone is necessary to avoid an imminent hazard to the public safety. Notification of my intention to temporarily place these substances into schedule I will be published in the Federal Register. I intend to publish a temporary scheduling order as soon as possible thereafter. In accordance with 21 U.S.C. § 811(h)(4), I will take into consideration any comments received from the Secretary or her delegate in response to this notice, including information as to whether there is an exemption or approval in effect for MDPV, mephedrone, or methylone under Section 505 of the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. § 355).

Appropriate Drug Enforcement Administration staff members are available to respond to questions and comments regarding this matter. Joseph T. Rannazzisi, Deputy Assistant Administrator, Office of Diversion Control, will act as liaison for this exchange of information. He may be reached at (202) 307-7165.

Sincerely,

Michele M. Leonhart
Administrator