

Bristow, Stuart introduce package of bills to protect police and first responders from exposure to synthetic opioids

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GRANITE CITY – To help protect police and first responders from the dangerous effects of exposure to synthetic opioids, state Reps. Monica Bristow, D-Godfrey, and

Katie Stuart, D-Collinsville, have introduced a package of legislation that increases the penalties for distributing the dangerous substance and creates stronger protections for law enforcement and first responders who may come into accidental contact with synthetic opioids, like Fentanyl.

“Throughout the Metro East, we are seeing the opioid epidemic tear apart and hurt families, and put our emergency responders at risk when they come into contact with these dangerous substances,” said Stuart. “This legislation helps protect our law enforcement officers and first responders who could be seriously harmed or injured through their service. We need to make sure that our laws are updated to not only address those that are put in harm’s way, but also to protect the brave individuals fighting keep our community safe.”

The legislators are introducing a package of bills in the Illinois House of Representatives after accidental exposure to Fentanyl sent two police officers and an EMT worker to the hospital during a police response at a Metro East night club. Law enforcement is becoming more and more concerned about the powerful drug, which can cause a severe or fatal overdose just by accidentally inhaling or touching the substance. Bristow and Stuart’s legislation creates the offense of Reckless Endangerment of a First Responder by Fentanyl Exposure, which makes it a class 2 felony if a first responder is harmed because of contact with fentanyl.

“We have a responsibility to our law enforcement officers and first responders to do what we can to ensure their safety when doing an already stressful and dangerous job,” said Bristow. “Synthetic drugs like Fentanyl not only destroy the lives of those who choose to use them, but a tiny amount can cause serious health issues or an accidental overdose of anyone that encounters them. It’s important that we not only work together with local police, educators and leaders to respond, but to also make sure that we have programs in place to help save lives and help law enforcement combat this issue.”

Their legislation also enhances the penalties for dealing other drugs or substances laced with fentanyl to increase its potency, while requiring that any legal prescription for the opioid is added to the Prescription Monitoring Program in a quicker time frame, to help track prescriptions and prevent abuse.

“The fight against opioid abuse in the Metro East requires the input of community member and leaders as we continue to try and combat an issue that continues to grow,” said Col. Richard E. Miller, Granite City Chief of Police. “The legislation filed by Reps. Stuart and Bristow helps protect law enforcement as they continue to fight against this drug abuse crisis. These types of opioids create a very dangerous situation for those who encounter them, which is usually first responders or those on the scene of an emergency.”

For more information, please contact Bristow or Stuart's full time constituent services office.