

**OPIOID ADDICTION COMMITTEE
MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2021
3:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Janet Sutherland, Chairwoman
Kevin W. Hines, Robert C. Sassi, Darcie Miller

ALSO

PRESENT: Katherine E. Bonelli, Chairwoman
John S. Vero, Majority Leader
Barry J. Cheney, Legislator
Betsy N. Abraham, Esq., Legislative Counsel
Mary Pat Smith, Assistant to County Executive/Chief of Staff
Annette Kahrs, President, Tri-County Community Partnership,
Hope Not Handcuffs Program
Kim Haney, Guest

Ms. Sutherland called the meeting to order at 3:11 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. All committee members were present with the exception of Ms. Miller who arrived at 3:13 p.m. and Legislator Luján who was absent .

Ms. Sutherland explained that they were going to review the resolution addressing safety concerns of Kratom and requesting better regulations on the substance. She read the resolution:

RESOLUTION OF THE ORANGE COUNTY LEGISLATURE ADDRESSING THE SAFETY CONCERNS OF KRATOM AND REQUESTING FEDERAL AND STATE REGULATION OF THE SUBSTANCE.

WHEREAS, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has warned consumers not to use *Mitrogyne speciosa*, commonly known as kratom, a plant which grows naturally in Southeast Asia; and

WHEREAS, kratom affects the same opioid brain receptors as morphine and appears to have properties that expose users to the risks of addiction, abuse, and dependence; and

WHEREAS, the FDA has further made known its concern of serious health consequences, including death, for those who consume kratom; and

WHEREAS, kratom has been marketed for opioid cessation, pain treatment, and other medical uses with no adequate well controlled scientific studies involving the use of kratom as a treatment for opioid use withdrawal or other diseases in humans; and

WHEREAS, there have not been studies on how kratom, when combined with other substances, may impact the body, its dangers, potential side effects, or interactions with other drugs; and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published data pertaining to kratom involved overdose deaths occurring between July 2016 to December 2017, in a report of April 12, 2019, noting that kratom was determined to be a cause of death for 91 out of 152 kratom-positive

decedents, including seven for whom kratom was the only substance to test positive on postmortem toxicology; and

WHEREAS, kratom is deemed illegal or controlled in several countries including Australia, Denmark, Germany, Malaysia and Thailand and banned in several states and municipalities in the U.S., including Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin; and

WHEREAS, currently, kratom is readily and easily sold throughout Orange County at tobacco shops, gas stations, and other purveyors of various paraphernalia; and

WHEREAS, the Orange County Legislature desires that evidence based studies of kratom are conducted and that regulation of this substance is administered to prevent serious health consequences and the potential death of individuals that consume kratom within the County; therefore, be it hereby

RESOLVED, that the Orange County Legislature urges the United States Food and Drug Administration and the New York State Department of Health to promptly consider guidelines and protocols for the regulation of kratom; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Clerk of Legislature is hereby directed to forward a certified copies of this Resolution to Janet Woodcock, M.D., Acting Commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, New York State Governor Kathy Hochul, United States Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand, United States Senator Charles E. Schumer, United States Congressman Sean Patrick Maloney, New York State Senator James Skoufis, New York State Senator Mike Martucci, New York State Assemblyman Karl Brabenec, New York State Assemblyman Colin Schmitt, New York State Assemblyman Brian D. Miller, New York State Assemblywoman Aileen M. Gunther, and New York State Assemblyman Jonathan G. Jacobson.

Mr. Sassi moved the request for a Resolution of the Orange County Legislature addressing the safety concerns of Kratom and requesting Federal and State regulation of the substance, seconded by Mr. Hines.

Mr. Sassi thanked Ms. Haney and Ms. Kahrs for attending the meeting. Ms. Haney knows about this personally, unfortunately. It is interesting that we refer to the CDC for guidance for COVID-19. Everyone says, "the CDC says this or the CDC says that." The CDC also says that Americans are dying from Kratom overdoses. Kratom is used as a substitute for opioids. If the CDC recognizes this, and if the majority of the users use it for pain and it is sold at not the most reputable places, if it is so wonderful, why is it not recognized. It is a plant, it is natural so it is not regulated, it should be regulated. If there are medicinal benefits then the FDA should recognize that and he did not see that. He thought it was an excellent resolution.

Ms. Miller stated that since the resolution has been recognized by the community, she received a number of emails from people who want to advocate for the continued sale of Kratom and sharing their stories about the benefits. For some that may be the case. The resolution is asking for more research and regulation which is reasonable.

Chairwoman Bonelli commended Ms. Sutherland for bringing this to the attention of her fellow colleagues through the Opioid Committee. They are following the proper protocol and getting this on the agenda in a timely fashion so at the next meeting for the Rules, Enactments and

Intergovernmental Relations they can have a resolution that will go before the full Legislature. She thanked Ms. Sutherland for bringing their attention to this because it is something that many people are not aware of, and she has taken her responsibility very seriously as Chair of the Opioid Addiction Committee. She thanked her and fellow committee members for moving this forward.

Ms. Sutherland stated that this was all possible through team effort along with the courage of the Haney family and others who shared their story with them through Hope Not Handcuffs and the efforts they are making. She appreciates those who shared their stories of success but it takes a large amount of courage to share stories of loss. She thanked Legislative Counsel Abraham for preparing the resolution.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Hines asked Ms. Miller about the warning of five recent deaths and a safety alert that was put out. He had a constituent contact him and ask what the alert was about, what was the drug that they were targeting, what community?

Ms. Miller stated that through OD Map in high intensity drug areas they can track through Orange County fatal and non-fatal overdoses. They have the system set so that if there are five or more overdoses in a 24-hour period they get a notification at the Department of Mental Health. They are not necessarily fatal overdoses and they put out a message to the community that informs the community know that there were five overdoses within a 24-hour period and attached to the message is information about overdose prevention.

Mr. Hines asked is she knew what type of drug it was.

Ms. Miller responded that the OD Map does not give that information at that time but they do get additional information that they can pull from OD Maps so it does have that additional information. When the alerts come in that is to tell them, "high alert, they had a number of overdoses in a short period of time."

On the motion of Mr. Sassi, seconded by Ms. Miller, the meeting adjourned at 3:24 p.m.