

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE  
COUNTY OF SUFFOLK

WILLIAM R. SPENCER, M.D.  
LEGISLATOR 18<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

15 PARK CIRCLE – SUITE 209  
CENTERPORT, N.Y.  
11721

CHAIR  
HEALTH COMMITTEE

VICE-CHAIR  
WAYS AND MEANS

MEMBER  
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE



PHONE: (631) 854-4500  
FAX: (631) 854-4503

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Dear Editor,

In this fast paced world with so much to do, it seems we are always looking for a way to increase energy. While many look to their morning cup of coffee for an energy boost, a new, highly potent and dangerous form of caffeine has infiltrated the market: powdered caffeine.

Powdered caffeine promises to give consumers extra energy, focus, weight loss, and even improved sports abilities. Because of these alluring claims, its low cost and accessibility, powdered caffeine has become increasingly popular among the most vulnerable, our youth. The product, which is essentially 100% caffeine, comes with several adverse health risks, including death, yet anyone can purchase the product.

Where powdered caffeine differs from other sources of the stimulant is in its dosing. Due to the high concentration of caffeine found in small amounts of the substance, even a simple error in calculation of dosage can lead to an overdose. Since the recommended dosage of this drug is 1/16<sup>th</sup> of a TEASPOON, it would be naïve for us to think that anyone could properly measure a safe amount of this drug. Our culture subscribes to the "more is better" motto, however, in the case of powdered caffeine, ***more can be deadly.***

Following the tragic overdose of an Ohio high school senior in May, the FDA has issued a warning message urging consumers to avoid powdered caffeine products. They have also gone on record as stating that they are collecting additional information on these products and are considering regulatory action. Powdered caffeine is classified as a dietary supplement and as such, it is not subject to the same stringent set of regulations as "conventional" foods and drug products.

With the health and well-being of our young residents in mind, I partnered with Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory to introduce I.R. 1727, a Local Law that prohibits the sale and distribution of powdered caffeine to individuals under the age of 18 in Suffolk County. The law, which was presented to the Suffolk County Legislature on Tuesday, October 7th garnered bi-partisan support and was approved unanimously.

Since taking office in 2012 it has been my goal to continue advancing progressive health initiatives in Suffolk County. I am confident that this legislation will save lives and am hopeful that our efforts in Suffolk County will provide avenues for future conversations on a national level regarding the dangers of this product.

Sincerely,

William R. Spencer, M.D.  
Suffolk County Legislator  
18<sup>th</sup> Legislative District