

AB 837: Ketamine

Assemblymember Laurie Davies

IN BRIEF

AB 837 would add ketamine to the list of controlled substances for which it is a crime to transport, import, furnish, administer, or give away.

THE ISSUE

The California Uniform Controlled Substances Act, categorizes controlled substances into 5 designated schedules, places the greatest restrictions on those substances contained in Schedule I, and generally places the least restrictive limitations on controlled substances classified in Schedule V. Ketamine is classified as a Schedule III controlled substance in meaning it has medical uses but also a potential for abuse, leading to restrictions on its sale and distribution.

In recent years California has passed legislation ensuring that certain controlled substances have extra restrictions placed upon them in terms of selling and importing into the state when the reason is outside of a verified medical or veterinary purpose. When sold outside of legitimate medical channels, ketamine use lacks the necessary supervision to ensure safety. Without appropriate dosing and monitoring, it increases the risk of harmful outcomes. Prolonged use of ketamine has been linked to cognitive impairment, memory loss, and psychological issues, including anxiety, depression, and hallucinations.

Ketamine has also seen a rise in usage and trafficking in the illegal underground market. In July 2024, [U.S. Coast Guard officials said](#) a “potent powder known among users and traffickers as “pink cocaine” is gaining traction in the United States, including in New York and California... The illicit concoction, which sells for as little as \$10 per gram, doesn't typically contain cocaine, despite its nickname. Instead, the powder tinted with food coloring widely comprises ketamine, along with smaller amounts of MDMA, methamphetamine or opioids.” The new drug, also known on the streets as “tusi” is a phonetic translation of “2C” – a series of synthetic hallucinogens primarily favored by hard-partying clubgoers.

California law must be updated to ensure the safety of its citizens and to give more tools to law enforcement to crack down on the illegal use and transport of Ketamine outside of a medical or veterinary setting.

CURRENT LAW

Existing law makes it a crime to transport, import, sell, furnish, administer, or give away, including to offer or attempt to transport, import, sell, furnish, administer, or give away, specified controlled substances. Furthermore, existing law makes a violation of that provision punishable by imprisonment in the county jail for 3, 4, or 5 years.

THE SOLUTION

AB 837 adds Ketamine to the list of controlled substances for which it is illegal to amongst other things transport unless it is for a medical or veterinary purpose.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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