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March 25, 2025

TO: The Honorable Pamela Beidle, Chair
Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Irnise F. Williams, Deputy Director, Health Education and Advocacy Unit

RE: House Bill 0996- Public Health - Phenibut Consumer Protection Act-
SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

The Health Education and Advocacy Unit supports with amendments House Bill 996. Phenibut is a psychoactive substance used recreationally for euphoric effects. It was developed in Russia to treat anxiety, insomnia, and alcohol withdrawal, but has no approved use in the United States.[1] Phenibut, is an addictive substance that is not safe to consume; consumption and withdrawal have led to cases of death and coma. Other adverse effects range from sedation, respiratory depression, and reduced levels of consciousness, as well as withdrawal symptoms including anxiety, agitation, and acute psychosis.[2] Calls to poison control centers for phenibut exposure have risen dramatically over the last decade.[3] Over 1,300 reports of phenibut exposure were reported between 2009 and 2019, with over 600 reports in 2018-2019 alone. Twelve percent of all reported cases were considered life threatening or resulted in significant disability or disfigurement, including three deaths and more than 80 cases resulting in coma.

[1] Clin Toxicol (Phila). 2022 Apr, Quantity of phenibut in dietary supplements before and after FDA warnings.

[2] https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6935a5.htm

[3] *Notes from the Field*: Phenibut Exposures Reported to Poison Centers — United States, 2009–2019

The FDA has issued at least four warning letters against companies marketing phenibut products as dietary supplements, conventional foods, and unapproved dietary supplements, such that adding phenibut renders these products adulterated.[4]

The prevalence of these products and the inherent safety risks, including the high potential for abuse, demand removal of these dangerous products from Maryland's marketplace. In Alabama, phenibut was made a Schedule II substance in November 2021. As of 2021, phenibut is a controlled substance in Australia, France, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania and Germany.

The HEAU supports a bill that ***prohibits*** the advertisement, distribution, or sale of a phenibut product and offers the attached amendments to reflect that support.

With these amendments, the HEAU urges a favorable report.

HEAU Amendments

On page 2, beginning at line 14 after (A), strike entirely through line 30.

On page 3, strike in its entirety, beginning at line 1 through line 17.

On page 3, line 18 strike OR and add **OR ADVERTISE** after the word expose.

On page 3, line 19 strike "under the age of 21 years".

On page 3, line 28 after subsection (A), strike (2), (B), or (C).

On page 4, strike in its entirety, lines 2 through 29.

On page 5, strike lines 1-3.

[4] https://www.fda.gov/food/information-select-dietary-supplement-ingredients-and-other-substances/phenibut-dietary-supplements