
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO HIGHWAY SAFETY.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that there is a need to
2 amend the definition of "drug" for offenses under chapter 291E,
3 Hawaii Revised Statutes, involving the use of intoxicants while
4 operating a vehicle. For example, in order to convict an
5 offender of the offense of operating a vehicle under the
6 influence of an intoxicant when the intoxicant is a drug under
7 section 291E-61(a)(2), Hawaii Revised Statutes, the prosecution
8 must prove beyond a reasonable doubt that:

- 9 (1) The person was operating the vehicle; and
10 (2) The person was under the influence of any drug that
11 impaired the person's ability to operate the vehicle
12 in a careful and prudent manner.

13 However, because the term "drug" is defined for purposes of
14 chapter 291E, Hawaii Revised Statutes, as any controlled
15 substance listed in schedules I through IV of chapter 329,
16 Hawaii Revised Statutes, it can be difficult for the prosecution
17 to prove the second prong of the foregoing offense because many



1 drugs, like kava and certain muscle relaxants, can cause serious
2 impairment of drivers but are not scheduled as controlled
3 substances. In addition, there have been recent attempts at the
4 federal and state levels to remove cannabis and
5 tetrahydrocannabinols from the schedule of controlled
6 substances. If these were to succeed, persons found to be
7 driving while impaired by cannabis could not be persecuted under
8 Hawai'i's current operating a vehicle under the influence of an
9 intoxicant statute.

10 The legislature further finds that the process of placing a
11 drug or substance on the schedule of controlled substances does
12 not respond quickly enough to emerging drugs. Synthetic drugs
13 can be manufactured very rapidly and can avoid law enforcement
14 when they are created by changing the chemical composition of an
15 existing drug; in this manner, synthetic drugs like "spice" and
16 "bath salts" evade the scheduling process. In order to quickly
17 adapt and prosecute offenders using new emerging drugs, law
18 enforcement should not be forced to rely solely on the
19 controlled substance schedules for certain offenses.

20 The purpose of this Act is to clarify the definitions of
21 "drug", "substance", and "substance abuse" for purposes of



1 operating a vehicle under the influence of an intoxicant
2 violations.

3 SECTION 2. Section 291E-1, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
4 amended as follows:

5 1. By adding a new definition to be appropriately inserted
6 and to read:

7 "Substance abuse" means the use or misuse of alcohol, any
8 drug on schedules I through IV of chapter 329, or any substance
9 as defined in this section, to any extent deemed deleterious or
10 detrimental to the user, to others, or to society."

11 2. By amending the definition of "drug" to read:

12 "Drug" means any controlled substance, as defined and
13 enumerated in schedules I through IV of chapter 329, or its
14 metabolites[-], or any substance that, when taken into the human
15 body, can impair the ability of a person to operate a vehicle
16 safely."

17 3. By amending the definition of "substance" to read:

18 "Substance" [~~and "substance abuse" have the same meanings~~
19 ~~as provided in section 321-191.] means any plant, medication,~~
20 poison, natural or synthetic chemical, or any compound or
21 combination of these, and includes but is not limited to central



1 nervous system depressants, central nervous systems stimulants,
2 hallucinogens, dissociative anesthetics, narcotic analgesics,
3 inhalants, and cannabis."

4 SECTION 3. This Act does not affect rights and duties that
5 matured, penalties that were incurred, and proceedings that were
6 begun before its effective date.

7 SECTION 4. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
8 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

9 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.



Report Title:

Drug; Substance; Substance Abuse; Definition; Operating a Vehicle; Intoxicants

Description:

Clarifies the definitions of "drug", "substance", and "substance abuse" for purposes of operating a vehicle under the influence of an intoxicant violations. (SD1)

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