



# NEWS RELEASE

Attorney General Mike Hilgers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 16, 2025

Attorney General Mike Hilgers hosted a press conference today to highlight his legislative priorities for 2025. Attorney General Hilgers was joined by Senator Kathleen Kauth and Senator Tanya Storer to unveil two bills in addition to those he announced earlier this week to protect children.

“I am grateful to Senator Kauth and Senator Storer for carrying these bills, which are both critical to our mission of keeping communities safe while supporting law enforcement. I look forward to working with the Legislature on passing these two important bills,” stated Attorney General Mike Hilgers.

Senator Kauth introduced a bill designed to stop the influx of dangerous products masquerading as hemp and clean up the illegal marketplace that has developed in Nebraska.

In 2018, Congress legalized the cultivation and sale of hemp as an agricultural commodity that could be grown under a state program. To establish a state program for Nebraska farmers, the Legislature passed the Nebraska Hemp Farming Act. Neither Congress nor the Legislature meant for harmful or intoxicating products to be sold under the umbrella of hemp.

Unfortunately, an illegal market of products containing dangerous synthetic cannabinoids has emerged and is harming Nebraskans, particularly vulnerable adults and children. This market has proliferated under confusion among consumers about what is legal and safe and what is not. This bill makes clear that these products are illegal. This bill would stop the influx of dangerous products being sold as hemp while still allowing CBD products to be possessed and used and hemp to be farmed under a federal license.

“I’m pleased to work with the AG to address the unintended consequences caused by the passage of the 2018 Farm bill, namely the proliferation of dangerous, synthetic cannabinoids,” said Senator Kathleen Kauth.

The second bill is developed from Attorney General Hilgers' visits across all 93 counties in his first year in office and regional meetings with County Attorneys, Sheriffs, and Police Chiefs this past year. Senator Tanya Storer's bill originates from the feedback received during these statewide gatherings Hilgers and his team organized. Various members of law enforcement expressed limited access to mental health care facilities. Due to the shortage, rural law enforcement officers are often required to take individuals in an active mental health crisis into

Emergency Protective Custody (EPC) until the individual can be transported long distances to receive needed care.

“The lack of mental health resources, long distances to care and the burden placed on law enforcement are issues that profoundly impact the rural parts of our state. When an individual must be taken in for emergency protective custody, it can be up to a two-hour drive for law enforcement to get them to the appropriate facility, and there is not a guarantee that a bed will be open immediately. This bill will be a significant step forward in helping communities address these issues and continue to work towards providing better access to care for the people of Nebraska,” said Senator Tanya Storer.

This bill will create a pilot program that directs the Crime Commission to select a county law enforcement agency that would be authorized to add mental health beds to its existing jail facility or utilize another local facility, to temporarily house individuals who have entered into EPC. These mental health beds will be a safe, non-incarcerated environment, allowing the individual in EPC to receive timely care. This bill will also minimize the burden on law enforcement agencies who struggle with limited available mental health beds and extended travel distances.

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Press conference video available after the conference [here](#).

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