

## Baltimore Business Journal

### **Powdered alcohol just became legal and Maryland isn't sure how to handle it**

Mar 13, 2015, 3:13pm EDT Updated: Mar 13, 2015, 3:59pm EDT



[Sarah Gantz](#)

Reporter- *Baltimore Business Journal*

Coming soon to a liquor store near you: A powdered version of alcohol and public health advocates' worst nightmare.

Palcohol, a powdered alcohol that turns into your cocktail of choice when mixed with liquid, on Mar. 10 received approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and will go on sale this summer. Maryland lawmakers and public health leaders are concerned the new, easily concealed alcohol will appeal to minors and want the state to look at ways to regulate its sale here.

"Youth is a time of risk-taking and experimentation, and these types of products have proven most popular among the heaviest drinking and more risk-prone youth," [David H. Jernigan](#), director of the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, wrote in an email.

Jernigan likened Palcohol to other "fad" products, such as alcohol-laced energy drinks.

"Our efforts should be focused on making alcoholic products less, not more, available to our nation's youth," he said.

Baltimore County Democrat Del. Dan Morhaim said he was not aware of any legislation planned for the current session, which ends April 13, but said the issue is something Maryland will need to look at in the future. Options range from a task force to look into Palcohol's effects to an outright ban on its sale.

Morhaim, a doctor who serves on the House Health and Government Operations Committee, said he is concerned that Palcohol could also be misused by adults who are unfamiliar with the potency of this new kind of drink.

Several states, including Vermont and Minnesota, are already considering a ban on powdered alcohol.

Palcohol is made by Arizona-based Lipsmark LLP and led by CEO [Mark Phillips](#). On the company's [website](#), Lipsmark rejects claims that powdered alcohol will be more dangerous or more accessible to youth, since it will be sold under the same regulations as liquid alcohol — you must be 21 to buy it and it could only be sold by retailers that already are authorized to sell liquor. Palcohol won't be on shelves for at least a few months.

The company says banning Palcohol could create a black market and will mean states miss out on valuable tax revenue.

"Every concern we've heard is unfounded speculation and that is no basis to outlaw a product," Lipsmark wrote on its website.

In Baltimore, Health Commissioner Dr. Leana Wen said the city is "looking at all available options."

Wen said that based on what she knows so far about powdered alcohol, she would support a ban.

Maryland in 2014 banned 190-proof grain alcohol, a measure that was in part motivated by efforts to curb binge drinking among college students.

Vaporized alcohol is also banned in Maryland.

Other options Maryland could pursue include establishing a task force to study Palcohol's potential impact. Since alcohol is regulated at county level, the state could instruct each county to establish its own rules.