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American Herbalists Guild

Statement on Recent Regulatory Actions by the New York State Attorney General

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The American Herbalists Guild (AHG) is a non-profit, educational, member-based organization founded to represent the goals and voices of herbalists specializing in the medicinal use of plants. The AHG's primary goal is to promote a high level of professionalism and education in the study and practice of therapeutic herbalism.

As an association of herbal practitioners the AHG considers it to be crucial that herbal products on the market be pure, unadulterated, and therapeutically potent. Manufacturers regardless of scale should uphold practices based on integrity, ethics, and sound processing techniques.

For this reason the AHG has been monitoring closely the recent actions of the Attorney General of New York to pull from the market certain in-store branded herbal products of four major retailers, based on DNA barcode testing results showing that a very high percentage of the products did not contain the herb listed on the label, and a significant but lower percentage were adulterated with ingredients not listed.

It has since been made clear by countless experts in the area of herbal and dietary supplement manufacturing that DNA barcode testing is a wholly inappropriate and inaccurate testing methodology for many of the products tested and found to be impure or adulterated. Such experts include the American Botanical Council, the American Herbal Products Association, the American Herbal Pharmacopoeia, and the U.S. Pharmacopoeia, among others. In particular DNA barcoding is not a sound method for testing the integrity of any herbal product that is an extract, which appears to be the case for at least a significant percentage of the products in question. The American Herbal Pharmacopoeia (AHP) has released a 58 page paper detailing the accepted and established testing that should be conducted for the products in question.

While the AHG believes the public deserves to have confidence that herbal products they purchase will be therapeutically active and manufactured with integrity without exception, and is not opposed to such regulatory action if and when it is fully warranted, it is clear in this case that it is not. The AHG urges the NYS Attorney General to take the expert advice being offered to him to retest the products in question using sound and proven methods as set forth by respected organizations such as the AHP and USP, and to cease from regulatory action until that time.

Members of the public wondering where to turn for unbiased and expert advice on herbal medicines and how to use them effectively and safely, can turn to local practitioners and experts in the field. The AHG maintains an on-line searchable database of Registered Herbalists who have met the organization's stringent standards for excellence in the field: <http://www.americanherbalistsguild.com/member-profiles>

Further resources:

- ABC statement: <http://cms.herbalgram.org/press/2015/ABCSaysNYAttyMisusedDNA.html?ts=1423079721&signature=45045c4b42ee9a0f74bc72a65b7a9a52&ts=1423315187&signature=4a75779681a27b039937db4ff377cec8&ts=1423344453&signature=ca344ef259d9142e691ac026188bd6d8&ts=1423755693&signature=2be4ebe760b857ef5f5ad52fba3ce9c2>
- AHPA statement: <http://www.ahpa.org/Default.aspx?tabid=505>
- AHP detailed response: <http://www.herbal-ahp.org/documents/newsroom/AHP%20Response%20to%20NY%20AG%202.6.15.pdf>
- Associated Press article "Supplements industry derides NY attorney general's DNA tests": http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US_HERBAL_SUPPLEMENTS_INVESTIGATION?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT
- Original Press Release by the NYS Attorney General: <http://www.ag.ny.gov/press-release/ag-schneiderman-asks-major-retailers-halt-sales-certain-herbal-supplements-dna-tests>