

February 23, 2024

The Honorable Dafna Michaelson Jenet
Colorado General Assembly
200 E Colfax
Denver, CO 80203

Subject: American Medical Association support for House Bill 24-1003,
“Concerning Measures Related to Harm Reduction for Students”

Dear Senator Michaelson Jenet:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I write in **support of House Bill (HB) 24-1003**, “Concerning Measures Related to Harm Reduction for Students.” The AMA supports HB 24-1003 as a commonsense step to increase access to life-saving opioid-overdose reversal medications to save lives from overdose and harm reduction supplies to detect potentially fatal additives to illicit and counterfeit drugs.

Tragically, more than 2,200 adolescents (ages 10-19) died in the United States between July 2019—December 2021 with nearly 84 percent involving illicitly manufactured fentanyl; an opioid of any type was involved in more than 91 percent of deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).¹ Naloxone was administered only 30 percent of the time, according to the CDC.² Unintentional drug overdose deaths among young people ages 15-19 continued to remain high in 2022, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse.³ Two-thirds of those who died did not have any history of prior opioid use.⁴

News reports indicate that Colorado has the second highest death rate for teen overdose in the United States.⁵ Colorado has been one of the most active states in the nation in increasing access to naloxone⁶ and HB 24-1003 is another key step to helping ensure that life-saving medication is available in a greater number of school-based settings, including buses and school-sponsored events. In addition to increasing access to these life-saving medications, the AMA further supports HB 24-1003 because it will help increase the availability of fentanyl test strips and other testing supplies, as well as continue to enhance

¹ Tanz LJ, Dinwiddie AT, Mattson CL, O'Donnell J, Davis NL. Drug Overdose Deaths Among Persons Aged 10–19 Years — United States, July 2019–December 2021. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2022;71:1576–1582.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7150a2>

² *Ibid.*

³ Unintentional Drug Overdose Death Rates Among US Youth Aged 15-19. National Institute on Drug Use. December 13, 2023. Available at <https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/trends-statistics/infographics/unintentional-drug-overdose-death-rates-among-us-youth-aged-15-19>

⁴ *Id.*, at 2.

⁵ Colorado second in US for teen overdose death rates: study. KDVR. January 11, 2024. Available at <https://kdvr.com/news/health/colorado-2nd-in-us-for-teen-overdose-death-rates-study/>

⁶ Colorado one of the top ten states with respect to naloxone dispensed from retail pharmacies between 2018-2022. IQVIA Xponent limited to retail pharmacy dispensed prescriptions. Definition: USC 78312 Opioid Reversal Agents (naloxone). State-by-state data available at <https://end-overdose-epidemic.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/AMA-2023-overdose-report-IQVIA-data-naloxone-FINAL.pdf>

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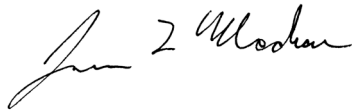
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opioid- and other drug-related education and awareness campaigns. If it was not for increasing access to naloxone, thousands more Coloradoans, including youth and adolescents, would likely be dead.

The AMA commends you for your leadership in advancing these life-saving policies. We are all working to prevent youth and adolescents from using illicit and counterfeit drugs, and while we continue to pursue youth-focused education, prevention, and treatment efforts, we also must advance public health policy to save lives from overdose. Naloxone and other opioid-overdose reversal agents can only save lives when it is readily available for use—and it gets used—during an overdose event. HB 24-1003 will help keep youth and adolescents alive. **For this reason, the AMA strongly urges a “Yes” vote in the Colorado General Assembly and Colorado Senate on HB 24-1003.**

If you have any questions, please contact Daniel Blaney-Koen, JD, Senior Attorney, Advocacy Resource Center at daniel.blaney-koen@ama-assn.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Madara". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

James L. Madara, MD

cc: Colorado Medical Society