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May 31, 2017

The Honorable Charlie Dent  
United States House of Representatives  
2082 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Dent:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing to express our support for your legislation, H.R. 1732, the “Synthetic Drug Control Act of 2017.” This bill would address the public safety and public health threat posed by the dangerous use of synthetic drugs by closing a gap in current law by regulating new synthetic drugs and restricting their sale and distribution.

Although Congress passed AMA-supported legislation in 2012 that placed 26 synthetic drugs (including K2 and Spice) in Schedule 1 under the Controlled Substances Act (CSA), drug traffickers have devised ways to circumvent federal drug laws by slightly altering the chemical structure of their products and designing new synthetic drugs that mimic the effects of controlled substances. These new products are currently unregulated and are frequently marketed to young people as innocent products like “bath salts,” plant food, or incense. They also include variations of the extremely dangerous opioid fentanyl, which has been wreaking havoc across the country and resulting in a sharp increase in drug overdoses and deaths due to such overdoses. H.R. 1732 would require the Attorney General of the United States to classify approximately 250 dangerous synthetic substances—new synthetic drug compounds identified by the Drug Enforcement Administration since passage of the 2012 legislation—under Schedule I of the CSA.

We applaud your leadership in introducing this legislation, and look forward to working with you to advance this important bill to protect the public, especially our young people, from the dangers of these synthetic drugs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James L. Madara". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James L. Madara, MD