

June 6, 2017

The Honorable Rob Portman  
United States Senate  
448 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

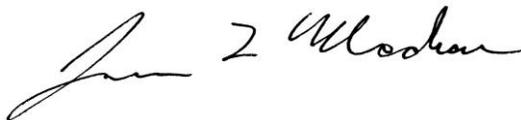
Dear Senator Portman:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing to express our support for S. 372, the “Synthetics Trafficking and Overdose Prevention Act of 2017” (or the “STOP Act”). This bill would close a loophole under U.S. mail system standards that currently allow dangerous synthetic drugs, such as fentanyl, to be shipped from foreign countries to drug traffickers in the U.S. through the United States Postal Service (USPS).

In 2015, 368 pounds of illicit fentanyl were seized nationally by law enforcement officials. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, fentanyl is up to 100 times stronger than morphine and 30 to 50 times more potent than heroin. Although fentanyl is largely used to treat severe pain, such as with cancer patients, increasingly fentanyl misuse is resulting in a tragic increase in overdose deaths, especially when fentanyl is mixed with heroin. Just a very small amount of the drug—i.e., 2 milligrams, which is equivalent to two grains of salt—can be fatal if inhaled or handled. According to a 2017 report from the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, much of the illicitly-produced fentanyl entering the country comes from China and India. The drug is often sent to drug traffickers in the U.S. through parcels shipped through the USPS. Unlike UPS or FedEx, the USPS does not require advance electronic customs data for the vast majority of mail entering the U.S., and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) cannot manually scan these packages due to the volume of mail.

The STOP Act would require shipments from foreign countries through the USPS to provide advance electronic customs data before such shipments cross United States borders, thereby enabling CBP to better target and track potential illegal packages and prevent dangerous drugs such as fentanyl from reaching drug traffickers. This, in turn, would help provide a vital tool in fighting the opioid epidemic, which is ravaging families and communities across the country, and help save lives. The AMA applauds your leadership in introducing this important bill, and looks forward to working with you and your colleagues to help advance it in Congress.

Sincerely,



James L. Madara, MD