

April 6, 2015

The Honorable Joseph Hardy, MD
Chair
Senate Health & Human Services Committee
The Nevada State Senate
401 South Carson Street
Carson City, NV 89701-4747

Re: American Medical Association support for Amendments to Senate Bill 459

Dear Chair Hardy:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and medical student members, I write in support of the friendly amendments to Senate Bill (S.B.) 459 offered by the Nevada State Medical Association (NSMA) to enhance access to naloxone and to help reduce unintended consequences of new mandates on checking a prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP).

Generally, many states in the past few years have looked to PDMPs as one tool to help physicians and other health care professionals learn more about patients' use of controlled substances.¹ The data has been mixed and inconclusive, however, regarding whether a mandate – by itself – helps reduce prescription drug abuse, misuse, overdose or death.² One recent study³ observed that – following enactment of a mandate to check the PDMP in New York – there was a decrease in prescriptions for controlled substances in emergency department academic medical centers, but an increase at emergency departments in community settings. Preliminary research from New York also suggests that the mandate may increase patients seeking heroin.⁴

That is one reason why many states have agreed to pursue voluntary requirements for checking a PDMP as well as provide exemptions from checking in a variety of settings, including the emergency department, when there is a limited supply of controlled substances prescribed. The NSMA friendly amendment to S.B. 459 provides a reasonable exemption for prescribing in the emergency department that would help ensure access to timely care for patients in Nevada.

¹ The National Alliance for Model State Drug Laws (NAMSDL) has a detailed state-by-state compilation of state legislation, including what states provide exemptions from checking the PDMP in certain circumstances. See <http://www.namsdl.org/library/99D9A3E8-C13E-3AF4-8746F4333CA2A421/>

² See, for example, Rebecca L. Haffajee, JD, MPH, Journal of the American Medical Association, "Mandatory Use of Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs," available at <http://jama.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=2107540>

³ See <http://www.annemergmed.com/article/S0196-0644%2814%2900861-0/pdf> for an abstract of this study from the Annals of Emergency Medicine.

⁴ Medscape. Brauser, Deborah, "Opioid Prescriber Monitoring May Increase Overdose Deaths." December 12, 2014. Available at <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/836489>

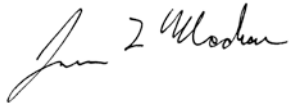
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The AMA also supports the efforts of the NSMA and the Nevada Senate to increase access to naloxone. The AMA strongly supports provisions in S.B. 459 that would increase access to naloxone by law enforcement and first responders as well as provide common sense liability protections. Across the U.S. thousands of lives have been saved by law enforcement through the administration of naloxone. It is a medication that has no potential for abuse, can be easily administered, and is an important part of community, state and national overdose prevention efforts.

The naloxone provisions contained in S.B. 459 have received broad, national support from physicians and other health professionals who treat patients with substance use disorders, as well as law enforcement and other first responders, who often are the first people on the scene of an overdose. Approximately half of the states in the United States now have laws to increase access to naloxone, and Nevada's efforts continue the national momentum for every state to have such laws by the end of 2015.

If you have any questions, please contact Daniel Blaney-Koen, JD, Senior Legislative Attorney, Advocacy Resource Center, at daniel.blaney-koen@ama-assn.org, or (312) 464-4954.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "James L. Madara".

James L. Madara, MD

cc: Members of the Senate Health & Human Services Committee
The Honorable Patricia Spearman
Nevada State Medical Association