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February 3, 2014

The Honorable Shannon Jones
Ohio State Senate
Senate Building
1 Capitol Square, 1st Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

RE: American Medical Association support for House Bill 170, an Act to increase availability of naloxone for use in saving lives from drug overdose

Dear Senator Jones:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and student members, I am writing in support of House Bill (H.B.) 170, which would help increase the availability of naloxone in Ohio to help save lives from opioid-related drug overdose. The AMA strongly urges the Ohio Senate Medicaid, Health and Human Services Committee to report this bill favorably to the full Ohio State Senate.

The most important reason for the AMA's support is that naloxone saves lives. In addition, as Ohio – and much of the nation – struggles with crafting policies to help combat prescription drug abuse, diversion, overdose and death, the AMA urges that additional national and state focus be placed on strategies that complement combating diversion and misuse, and include policies that help physicians and other stakeholders to treat overdose and reduce deaths. It is the AMA's position that increasing the availability of naloxone to those at risk of overdose, and to persons close to those at risk, will accomplish these important goals.

This bill also would add important liability protections to physicians, other health care professionals and first responders who prescribe, administer and make naloxone available for those in need. This is the type of "Good Samaritan" provision that has proven successful in other states in making naloxone use more common.

A February 2012 report in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report summarized the findings from 48 community programs that distribute naloxone, finding that 10,171 overdose reversals were achieved.¹ Most recently, USA Today

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reported a program in Quincy, Massachusetts saved 211 lives when first responders administered naloxone.²

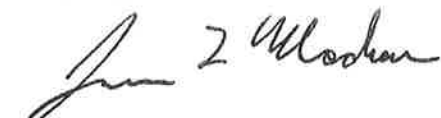
Nationally, the AMA has endorsed state legislation to increase availability of naloxone in many states³, as well as to the National Governors Association, the National Conference of Insurance Legislators and elsewhere because naloxone is a safe and effective U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved medication that reverses opioid overdose.⁴ The AMA also has expressed its support to the FDA, CDC and the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Locally, Ohio's own Project DAWN can be seen as the type of public health effort, including using naloxone, that helps save lives. The AMA supports these public health efforts and believes that H.B. 170 will allow similar efforts to expand and reach more Ohio residents at risk.

For these reasons, the AMA strongly urges the Ohio Senate Medicaid, Health and Human Services Committee to favorably report H.B. 170 to the full Ohio State Senate. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Daniel Blaney-Koen, JD, Senior Legislative Attorney, Advocacy Resource Center, at daniel.blaney-koen@ama-assn.org or (312) 464-4954.

Thank you for your efforts on this important public health issue.

Sincerely,



James L. Madara, MD

cc: Ohio State Medical Association

¹ Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (*MMWR*), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Community-Based Opioid Overdose Prevention Programs Providing Naloxone — United States, 2010, February 17, 2012 / 61(06);101-105. Available at http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6106a1.htm?s_cid=mm6106a1_w. Last accessed May 16, 2013.

² Police carry special drug to reverse heroin overdoses, Donna Leinwand Leger, USA Today. January 31, 2014. Available at <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/01/30/police-use-narcan-to-reverse-heroin-overdoses/5063587/>

³ See, for example, Colorado Senate Bill 13-014; New Jersey Assembly Bill 3095; and Oklahoma House Bill 1872.

⁴ A comprehensive discussion of AMA policies, including letters to legislators and national organizations, can be found at www.ama-assn.org/go/stopdrugabuse