



February 20, 2014

John Dreyzehner, MD, MPH
Commissioner
Tennessee Department of Health
710 James Robertson Parkway
Andrew Johnson Tower
Nashville, TN 37243

Re: American Medical Association support for House Bill 1427 and Senate Bill 1631, proposed legislation to increase availability of naloxone for use in saving lives from drug overdose.

Dear Commissioner Dreyzehner:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and student members, I am writing to commend the Tennessee Department of Health for its efforts in support of House Bill 1427 and Senate Bill 1631, which would help increase the availability of naloxone in Tennessee to help save lives from drug overdose. The AMA strongly supports this type of legislation because it will help save lives.

As Tennessee – 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. This should include policies that help physicians and other stakeholders to treat overdose and reduce deaths. Increasing the availability of naloxone to those at risk of overdose, and to persons close to those at risk will accomplish these important goals.

The AMA also appreciates that these bills would add important liability protections to physicians and other health care professionals 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.

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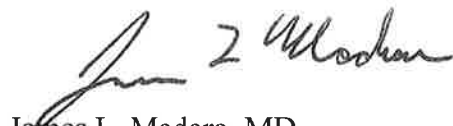
A February 2012 report in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report summarized the findings from 48 community programs that distribute naloxone, finding that 10,171 overdose reversals were achieved.¹ Most recently, USA Today reported a program in Quincy, Massachusetts saved 211 lives when first responders used 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.

The AMA looks forward to House Bill 1427 and Senate Bill 1631 becoming law. 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: Tennessee 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