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April 25, 2016

The Honorable Justin L. Alford
Senate Democratic Minority Leader
Senate Democratic Minority Office
3 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: American Medical Association Strongly Urges Veto Override of LD 1547, “An Act to Facilitate Access to Naloxone Hydrochloride”

Dear Senator Alford:

On behalf of the physician and student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I write to strongly urge your support in overriding Governor LePage’s veto of LD 1547, “An Act to Facilitate Access to Naloxone Hydrochloride.” We urge your support for one simple reason – this bill will save the lives of the people you represent.

Maine, like nearly every state in the nation, is seeing the tragedy of the nation’s prescription opioid and heroin epidemic unfold before our eyes literally on a daily basis. In response, the medical community and many others joined together to support new legislation that will have a direct effect on the supply of prescription opioids in Maine. The legislature also passed LD 1547 to address an equally important need – that is, help save lives from overdose.

The governor’s reasons for vetoing LD 1547 have been raised before, and thankfully, the medical and behavioral research stands in opposition to the myths. I have attached one relevant evidence review that unequivocally refutes those myths. In addition to the clear evidence that the governor’s objections are not grounded in science, the AMA highlights one fact that was repeatedly cited in testimony and by legislators in support of LD 1547. Specifically, naloxone is a proven medical intervention that saves lives and does not increase the risk of opioid misuse, which is why the AMA strongly supports increasing access to this medication through multiple means, including co-prescribing by physicians, access from community-based organizations, and access through pharmacies authorized with a collaborative practice agreement or standing order.

Nearly every state in the nation has moved to increase access to naloxone in these ways because they have recognized – not only the importance of increasing naloxone access – but the science that shows that increasing access to naloxone saves lives. The AMA urges the Maine legislature to override the governor’s veto and help save lives from overdose.

Sincerely,

James L. Madara, MD

Attachment
cc: Maine Medical Association