



February 5, 2014

The Honorable Richard Farnsworth
Chair
Committee on Health and Human Services
Maine House Representatives
2 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: American Medical Association support for Legislative Document 1686, an “Act to Address Preventable Deaths from Drug Overdose”

Dear Chairman Farnsworth:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and student members, I am writing in support of Legislative Document (L.D.) 1686, which would help increase the availability of naloxone in Maine to help save lives from opioid-related drug overdose. The AMA strongly urges the joint Committee on Health and Human Services to report this bill favorably to the full Maine legislature.

The most important reason for the AMA’s support is that naloxone saves lives. In addition, as Maine – 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 for 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. The AMA further supports the provision in L.D. 1686 that would collect data and report on trends and risk factors related to unintentional overdose fatalities – as well as potential interventions to reduce both fatal and nonfatal unintentional overdose events.

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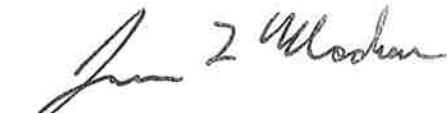
A February 2012 report in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report summarized the findings from 48 community programs that distribute naloxone, finding that 10,171 overdose reversals were achieved.¹ Most recently, USA Today reported a program in Quincy, Massachusetts saved 211 lives when first responders administered naloxone.²

Nationally, the AMA has endorsed state legislation to increase availability of naloxone in many states,³ 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.

For these reasons, the AMA strongly urges the joint Committee on Health and Human Services to report this bill favorably to the full Maine legislature. 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: Maine Medical Association
Committee on Health and Human Services
Representative Sara Gideon

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