

March 17, 2014

The Honorable Donna F. Edwards
U.S. House of Representatives
2445 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Edwards:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I extend strong support for H.R. 4169, the “Stop Overdose Stat Act of 2013,” which would increase support for direct services, education, collaboration among impacted stakeholders, and research to prevent overdose from prescription drugs, particularly opioids. The AMA is strongly committed to working with Congress and other stakeholders to support and implement a multi-pronged approach to combat the public health crisis of prescription drug abuse, misuse, diversion, overdose, and death. H.R. 4169 has sensible solutions that specifically target overdose deaths that can be avoided.

The AMA recognizes the great burden that opioid addiction and prescription drug abuse places on patients and society alike and reaffirms its support for the compassionate treatment of such patients. As a result, the AMA supports continued implementation of community-based programs offering naloxone and other opioid overdose prevention services in order to further develop best practices in this area. We also encourage the education of health care workers and opioid users about the use of naloxone in preventing opioid overdose fatalities. Furthermore, we support efforts to expand appropriate education of at-risk patients and their caregivers in the signs and symptoms of opioid overdose, and encourage the continued study and implementation of appropriate treatments and risk mitigation methods for patients at risk for opioid overdose.

H.R. 4169 addresses priority areas regarding prescription drug overdose prevention that the AMA supports, and creates a forum for major stakeholders and the AMA to work together to craft additional solutions and initiatives to reverse the rising trend in prescription drug abuse, diversion, overdose, and death. The bill would also authorize the Center for Disease Control and Prevention to award grants or cooperative agreements to public health agencies or community-based organizations with expertise in preventing deaths occurring from overdoses. The grants would be used to implement or enhance existing programs that provide overdose prevention

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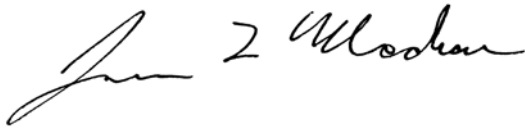
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options and offer awareness training to first responders, the public, physicians and pharmacists, among other related activities. Equally important, H.R. 4169 would require the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to establish a task force comprised of key stakeholders, including the AMA, in order to support HHS' development and submission of a plan to Congress to reduce the number of deaths occurring from drug overdoses.

We applaud your leadership and focus on this important public health issue and for offering a key solution that would be highly effective in reversing overdose deaths. The AMA looks forward to working closely with you to achieve successful passage and appropriation for H.R. 4169.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Madara". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

James L. Madara, MD