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March 20, 2015

The Honorable Edward Markey
United States Senate
218 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-2104

Dear Senator Markey:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am pleased to write in support of your recently-introduced legislation, S. 707, the “Opioid Overdose Reduction Act of 2015,” which would exempt from civil liability certain individuals who prescribe, provide, or administer opioid overdose drugs. Deaths from opioid overdoses may be prevented if an opioid overdose drug, such as naloxone, is administered in a timely manner, but the willingness of medical and non-medical personnel to administer such drugs, and physicians’ willingness to prescribe such drugs, may be deterred by concerns about potential civil liability.

Unintentional overdoses and deaths from prescription opioids continue to be serious public health issues.. The AMA supports programs offering naloxone and other opioid overdose prevention services and the education of opioid users and health care workers about the use of naloxone in preventing opioid overdose fatalities. Providing liability protection to medical and non-medical personnel for administering opioid overdose drugs, and to physicians and other medical personnel for prescribing or providing such drugs, could help encourage such individuals to step forward and intervene to save a family member, friend or stranger’s life.

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. The AMA commends your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James L. Madara". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James L. Madara, MD