

American Medical Association

Physicians dedicated to the health of America



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April 26, 2005

The Honorable Jeff Sessions
United States Senate
335 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Sessions:

On behalf of the American Medical Association and its physician and medical student members, thank you for introducing S. 518, the “National All Schedules Prescription Electronic Reporting Act of 2005.” This legislation would award grants to states to establish controlled substance monitoring programs or to improve upon existing programs. It would also provide physicians access to important information that would allow them to appropriately treat their patients’ pain or illness while helping to prevent the abuse and diversion of controlled substances.

Prescription drug abuse is a growing problem in many parts of our country. The nonmedical use of prescription drugs now ranks second behind marijuana as a category of illicit drug abuse among adults and youth. In 2002, the National Survey on Drug Use and Health conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) found that an estimated 6.2 million persons in the U.S. over the age of 12 reported “past month” use of prescription stimulants, sedatives, tranquilizers, and analgesics for non-medical purposes – compared to roughly 3.5 million and 1.6 million, respectively, in 2001 and 2000.

The AMA has long held that the central principle of balance – between preventing controlled substance abuse, trafficking, and diversion and ensuring access to necessary pain medication – should guide policy makers as they craft solutions to address these complex problems. Legislation, such as S. 518, which would create voluntary, state-based prescription drug monitoring programs, can serve as a critical tool to preserve this balance.

We are pleased that this legislation recognizes both the vital role physicians play in preventing prescription drug abuse as well as the importance of limiting access to confidential patient information. As S. 518 moves through the legislative process, we look forward to working with you to make improvements that further address the concerns of physicians and patients while providing a practical solution to the growing problem of controlled substance abuse in our country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael D. Maves".

Michael D. Maves, MD, MBA