

April 3, 2015

The Honorable Charisse Millett
Majority Leader, House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 204
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: Support for House Bill 125 - Relating to dextromethorphan

Dear Representative Millett,

On behalf of the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids, a national non-profit dedicated to reducing substance abuse among adolescents by supporting families and engaging with teens, I am writing to express support for House Bill 125, which would prohibit the sale of over-the-counter (OTC) cough medicine containing the ingredient dextromethorphan to those under the age of 18. We commend you for sponsoring this legislation, and support your efforts to prevent intentional abuse of dextromethorphan cough medicines.

Dextromethorphan, or DXM, is a cough suppressant and is the active ingredient in a number of nonprescription cough syrups, tablets and gel caps. When taken as directed, products containing DXM produce few side effects and have a long history of safety. It has no pain-relieving properties and is not physically addictive. Unfortunately, some teens abuse DXM by consuming these medications at high doses, well beyond the recommended amount for medical purposes, to get high.

When used in large amounts, DXM has dissociative effects, meaning it can distort how we perceive sight and sound, and create a feeling of detachment from our environment and selves. It can also cause a number of side effects ranging from the seriously unpleasant to the dangerous: nausea and vomiting, impaired physical coordination, double or blurred vision and rapid heartbeat.

Currently less than five percent of teens abuse DXM to get high. The behavior cuts across racial, ethnic and socioeconomic categories, and both boys and girls engage in this behavior. About half of those who abuse DXM do so only once or twice. For the other half, DXM is part of a menu of substances -- including alcohol and other drugs -- which they abuse. DXM is a fairly unpleasant and "uncool" high. Generally, it is chosen because of its widespread availability.

Enacting age restrictions for products containing DXM would go a long way to reducing the abuse of this otherwise safe medication. Seven states -- including Arizona, California, Kentucky, Louisiana, New York, Virginia and Washington -- have passed similar legislation, giving parents greater control over the medicines their children have access to.

For these reasons, we thank you for your support for HB 125 to help prevent abuse of dextromethorphan by teens in Alaska. Thank you for your consideration and for bringing additional attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "ML Taylor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Marcia Lee Taylor
Interim President and CEO