Linda M. Gobler
President

May 3, 2011

Letter of Support For CHPA Position

Pseudoephedrine (PSE), a safe and effective ingredient found in common cold and allergy medications is also used today by criminals who seek to illegally produce and abuse methamphetamine. As a result, in certain states, some elected officials are working to mandate a doctor's prescription to obtain these basic medicines containing PSE, even though law-abiding citizens would be punished with additional costs and burdens.

While the intentions of these individuals are good, we disagree on the solution. The Michigan Grocers Association (MGA) understands that meth abuse is a serious issue requiring both concern and action. There is a common sense and effective electronic blocking system that allows states to monitor purchases in real time of products containing PSE, but also stops sales to those individuals who should not be procuring these items.

The facts on the e-tracking system's performance are clear, as it has blocked 40,000 grams each month of PSE sales in states that have been online long enough to measure its success, including Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky and Louisiana. It also provides law enforcement with critical information that allows them to identify and hold to account those who seek to manufacture or use meth.

E-tracking is a reasonable approach as it stops criminals, while allowing law-abiding citizens to obtain the medicines they need for colds and allergies.

We support the innovative approach taken by Senator John Proos in SB 0333. His legislation establishes a real-time electronic tracking system that blocks the illegal sales while allowing continued access for consumers who depend on these medicines. More than twelve states have adopted e-tracking statutes, which require retailers to record sales of PSE in real-time and block sales to consumers who seek to purchase more than the legal limit. And by participating in the National Precursor Log Exchange (NPLEx) system, the e-tracking database will be integrated with participating states, so that meth cooks can't simply cross state lines to avoid the legal limits. In short, this is a real-time system that blocks thousands of sales to criminals, while allowing law-abiding citizens to get the medicines they need.

SB 0333 represents a smart use of modern technology to solve a serious problem. And it's the right solution for our state. This tracking system is provided to retailers, pharmacists and the state at no charge, so we can tackle the problem of meth without further burdening consumers, taxpayers or the state budget.

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We oppose legislation that would tackle the meth problem by requiring a doctor's prescription to purchase cold and allergy medicine containing PSE.

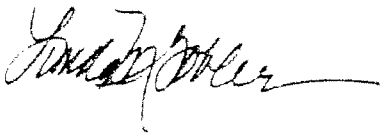
- This legislation is a burden to consumers who would have to take time off of work and school, and issue a co-pay for a doctor's appointment every time they or their child needs cold or allergy relief from PSE-containing medicines.

- It's a burden to the health care system, which would have to make room for literally millions of new and unnecessary doctor visits every year when 87 communities in Michigan are already classified as medically underserved areas.

- And it's a burden to taxpayers, and the already-stretched state budget. This legislation will reduce sales tax collections, while inflating the costs of Medicaid, employee health care costs and retiree health care costs.

MGA supports your coalition's efforts to solve the meth problem the right way and we join you in supporting SB 0333 and opposing the legislation requiring a prescription for PSE medications.

Sincerely,



Linda M. Gobler
President & CEO