DMC
Children's Hospital of Michigan

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cc. David R. Wade

I am writing to fully support Senate Bill no. 789, which provides the Michigan Department of Community Health authority to temporarily schedule substances that are an imminent danger to health. As the director of the Children's Hospital of Michigan Regional Poison Center, we have been monitoring an alarming trend of increased hospital visits related to emerging designer drugs, labeled not for human consumption, but sold with intent to abuse. We have received calls about 153 patients treated in the hospital from abuse of products labeled as bath salts, or novelty items, and which contain synthetic cathinones. Two of those patients died. Ingredients were documented as MDPV in one case and methylone in another. We have analyzed a variety of these products and have found a pattern of changing ingredients over time, and presence of multiple ingredients in some products. Most of those new ingredients are not currently scheduled drugs by either Michigan or federal law.

We have also been monitoring products sold as incense or potpourri, which others have analyzed and found to contain synthetic cannabinoids. Arkansas has found patterns similar to what we found with the cathinones, more than one ingredient per product, variability in the amounts from batch to batch and within sections of a single product, and patterns of abuse that include multiple inhaled products. Our recent analysis of the incense products found that the majority of patients were teenagers, and 18% had concurrent inhalant abuse with computer dust products. There are 159 exposures in 2011 to these products, with 67% in children less than 19 years of age. Nearly 60% of these exposures resulted in moderate (prolonged toxicity) or major outcomes (life-threatening).

Despite the poison centers' ability to work with the health department efficiently and our vital role as a sentinel of emerging abused substances, the current lack of legal authority has been insufficient designate rapidly changing ingredients as controlled, and has resulted in widespread harm, particularly to young adults, in the state of Michigan. I believe that Senate Bill no. 789 will provide a tool that will save lives.

Sincerely,

Susan C. Smolinske, PharmD, DABAT