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Testimony of Jordee Wells, MD, FAAP

House Bill 29 – Dextromethorphan Sales to Minors

June 25th, 2019

Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of House Bill 29, which would prohibit the sale of drugs that contain Dextromethorphan to minors. My name is Dr. Jordee Wells and I am here today on behalf of the nearly 3,000 members of the Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

This legislation represents a simple, common sense solution to a problem that impacts thousands of teens each year. As a Pediatrician who works in an active emergency department, I can attest to the dangers that DXM products pose when abused and the need for strong laws to prevent minors from obtaining these products without parental consent and awareness.

Dextromethorphan, or DXM, is a common ingredient in over-the-counter cough and cold products. Dextromethorphan is used as a non-addictive cough suppressant and, if used appropriately, is quite safe. However, in recent years it has become a drug of abuse, increasingly used and abused by adolescents and young adults to get high. There are a number of alternative names it goes including "triple c's", robo, skittles, velvet syrup, and Vitamin D. DXM can also be used in drugs such as methylenedioxy methamphetamine, also called Molly or MDMA. Some users will mix DXM with alcoholic drinks as well, creating a dual threat for intoxication and abuse.

Unfortunately, Dextromethorphan is widely available and is becoming very popular with adolescents and young adults. Poison control centers across Ohio see hundreds of DXM-related cases each year. The typical case is a high school age patient abusing an over-the-counter product arriving in the ER with confusion, hallucinations, agitation, rapid heart rate, and hypertension. Sometimes we also see vomiting and, in rare cases, seizures. In very rare cases, fatalities can result from DXM abuse.

Many other states have already enacted legislation prohibiting the sale of Dextromethorphan products to minors. Further, some retail pharmacies and grocery stores have proactively adopted age of purchase restrictions on these products. Nationally, we are already seeing the positive results of regulation in other states and increased consumer awareness.

I want to commend the bill sponsors, Representative Kyle Koehler, for taking on this important legislation and I strongly encourage the committee to support HB 29. Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.