

Statement in Support of House Bill HB699

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Physicians for Responsible Opioid Prescribing (PROP), a national nonprofit organization with a mission to reduce morbidity and mortality caused by overprescribing of opioids, urge the support of House Bill 699 sponsored by Representative Michelle Maldonado. PROP's members include clinicians and researchers in the fields of Pain, Addiction, Public Health, Emergency Medicine, Internal Medicine, Primary Care, Occupational Medicine, Evidence-Based Medicine and other specialties.

We are supporting immediate passage of House Bill 699 because the bill requires prescribers to inform patients and parents of patients about the risk of addiction when prescribing opioids. Unfortunately, many clinicians are ill-informed about the addiction potential of opioids and are thus unable to voluntarily communicate these risks to parents. Making it mandatory for prescribers to discuss opioid risks will result in better informed parents, patients and prescribers.

Opioids are essential medicines for easing suffering at the end of life and when used for a few days after major surgery or a serious accident. However, the bulk of opioid prescribing in Virginia and across the country is for common conditions where non-opioid medications are more appropriate. Unnecessary exposure to opioids, especially in children and teenagers, should be avoided. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics legitimate opioid use before high school graduation is independently associated with a 33% increase in the risk of future opioid misuse after high school. This association is concentrated among individuals who have little to no history of drug use.

Over the past 20 years, overprescribing of opioids has led to the worst drug addiction epidemic in our nation's history. The sharp increase in opioid addiction has led to record high levels of overdose death and a flood of heroin into neighborhoods where it was previously unavailable. Since 1999, more than one million Americans have died from opioid overdoses. To bring the opioid crisis under control, the medical community, including dentists, must start prescribing opioid more responsibly. And the public must become better informed about opioid risks.

By promoting more cautious opioid use, House Bill 699 will save lives and spare many families from the devastating impact of opioid addiction. We urge you to strongly support this bill.