



March 21, 2024

Tomás Aragón, M.D., Dr. P.H.
Director and State Public Health Officer
California Department of Public Health

RE: Urgent Appeal to Expand California's Naloxone Standing Order

Dear Dr. Tomás Aragón:

As legislators dedicated to the well-being of our constituents, my colleagues and I are writing to express our concern regarding California's standing order for naloxone and its inability to effectively address the complexities of our state's overdose crisis, particularly the alarming rise in fentanyl-related overdoses.

There is an urgent need for a more inclusive standing order that grants access to all FDA-approved opioid reversal medications. Right now, the standing order does not meet the needs of those on the frontlines, including law enforcement, first responders, educators, and community organizations. Unrestricted access to all available opioid reversal medications is not merely a luxury but a necessity in combating this escalating crisis effectively, which is why New Hampshire's Department of Health and Human Services recently expanded its standing order.

While the statewide distribution of naloxone has been successful in reversing more than 180,000 opioid overdoses since its inception, it fails to fully address the challenges posed by the "fourth wave" of the opioid epidemic. This wave, driven by the combination of synthetic opioids, underscores a critical point: naloxone's limitations lead to frontline workers administering two or more doses to reverse an overdose. Despite multiple doses, there remains a considerable risk that it may not prove effective in reversing an overdose at all.

The urgency of the situation demands stronger, more comprehensive solutions that are inclusive, adaptable, and reflective of the evolving challenges posed by fentanyl and other synthetic opioids.

Senate Bill 641 (Roth) aimed to provide frontline workers with "every tool in the toolbox" by expanding access to all FDA-approved opioid reversal medications, which is why the California Legislature unanimously supported the bill. Unfortunately, the bill's veto by Governor Gavin Newsom means many Californians will continue to overdose on synthetic opioids and powerful sedatives like xylazine, of which naloxone is not as effective in reversing.

I, along with my undersigned colleagues, respectfully request that the California Department of Public Health expand the current standing order to encompass all FDA-approved opioid reversal medications, better equipping those on the frontlines with the tools they need to respond to a crisis. We must seize this opportunity to save more lives and mitigate the devastating impact of opioid overdoses in our communities.

Sincerely,



Assemblymember Jasmeet Kaur Bains, M.D.



Assemblymember Juan Alanis



Assemblymember Joe Patterson



Senator Shannon Grove



Senator Susan Rubio



Assemblymember Matt Haney



Assemblymember Marie Waldron



Assemblymember Liz Ortega



Assemblymember Akilah Weber, M.D.



Assemblymember Jim Patterson

Cc: Robin Christensen, California Department of Public Health Chief Substance and
Addiction Prevention Branch
Ashley Mills, CDPH Community Wellness Assistant Deputy Director overseeing Office
of Suicide Prevention
Mark Ghaly, Secretary, Health & Human Services Agency
Marko Mijic, Undersecretary, Health & Human Services Agency
Michelle Baas, Director, Department of Health Care Services
Richard Figueroa, Deputy Cabinet Secretary for Office of the Governor
Analea Patterson, Cabinet Secretary for Office of the Governor
Members, California State Assembly
Members, California State Senate