



DATE: May 21, 2018

TO: The Members of the House Health Committee

FROM: The Pennsylvania Medical Society
The Hospital & Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania

SUBJECT: Oppose House Bill 1987

On behalf of The Pennsylvania Medical Society and The Hospital & Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania membership, we are writing to express our opposition to House Bill 1987.

House Bill 1987 would limit the use of fentanyl to surgery within a health care facility or to a hospice patient. Our organizations oppose this legislation because it would prevent appropriate use of the drug in clinical settings and, in turn, prevent patients from receiving the appropriate care.

We understand an amendment may be offered to expand some of the scenarios in which fentanyl may be used. However, we remain opposed to the legislation as it does not take into consideration all of the additional situations when the use of fentanyl is appropriate.

While our organizations are sensitive to the current challenges the commonwealth and the nation face with respect to opioids, we do not support limitations on a health care provider's clinical judgment. This bill can result in dangerous consequences to patients who have been deemed in necessity of opioids like fentanyl as part of their treatment. We believe there is a role in medicine for opioids in certain instances and have participated in the development of voluntary prescribing guidelines to this effect. These guidelines encourage health care providers to incorporate best practices when caring for patients receiving opioids for the treatment of pain but are not intended to replace clinical judgment. We believe that this legislation would not only limit this judgment but also be potentially harmful to the patients in need of treatment.

In a health care facility, fentanyl is appropriately administered in a variety of different situations. For example, the drug is used in intensive care units, burn units, some lower acuity units within the hospital and for some chronic nonmalignant pain treatments. Additionally, the bill does not differentiate between IV fentanyl and transdermal fentanyl. For example, transdermal fentanyl is used to get patients off of IV fentanyl when they have undergone a procedure.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our position on House Bill 1987 and ask for a negative vote when it comes before you in committee.