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November 3, 2015

The Honorable Charles Dent  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2211 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Dent:

On behalf of our nearly 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, and our 43,000 individual members, the American Hospital Association (AHA) is pleased to endorse your legislation, HR 3537, the Synthetic Drug Control Act of 2015.

In 2012, Congress passed the Synthetic Drug Abuse Prevention Act, permanently adding 26 types of synthetic drugs into Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) and giving the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) increased authority to designate additional products as controlled substances. The 2012 law also doubled the maximum length of time that the DEA can administratively schedule substances under its emergency, temporary scheduling authority from 18 to 36 months.

Since that time, however, many new synthetic substances have entered the market, leading to devastating health consequences and increased mortality, particularly among the nation's youth. Despite the urgent warnings of public health agencies and health care providers, the Office of National Drug Control Policy reports that nearly one in nine American high school seniors has used synthetic cannabinoids, commonly known as synthetic marijuana, K2, or Spice, products that are labeled for public sale as herbal incense or other legal products. Use of these drugs has been associated with rapid heart rate, vomiting, confusion and hallucinations, and in frequent users, symptoms of withdrawal and addiction.

The Synthetic Drug Control Act of 2015 would place additional synthetic drugs into Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act, providing the DEA with heightened authority to stop the distribution, sale, and use of these often deadly drugs. At the Health Subcommittee hearing on Oct. 20, we noted the overwhelming support from the treatment community for increased efforts to combat the rise in use of synthetic drugs. The AHA is pleased to join those voices in support of your legislation and commend you for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

Thomas P. Nickels  
Executive Vice President

