



Minnesota House of Representatives

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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE ONLINE DRUG BILL GETS BIPARTISAN SUPPORT

ST. PAUL – “Justin’s Bill,” is receiving strong bipartisan support as a means to clamp down on the growing problem of illegal online trafficking of prescription drugs.

The bill (HF2639) is named after the deceased son of Clearwater resident, Dan Pearson, who brought the issue to the attention of State Rep. Steve Gottwalt, R-St. Cloud. Following an injury, Justin Pearson became addicted to prescription pain killers he was able to easily purchase online in large quantities without any medical evaluation. The impact of the drugs eventually claimed his life on a Christmas morning.

Chief authors Gottwalt, and State Sen. John Marty, D-Roseville, are joined by Sen. Tarryl Clark, D-St. Cloud, and Reps. Tom Huntley, D-Duluth, Paul Thissen, D-Minneapolis, Jim Abeler, R-Anoka, and Bob Dettmer, R-Forest Lake, as co-authors. The bill will receive its first hearing today, before Thissen’s Health and Human Services Policy Committee.

According to a recent Columbia University study, 15.2 million people age 12 and over reported they abused prescription drugs in the past year. The report indicates since 2006 there has been a 70 percent increase in the number of Web sites that advertise or sell controlled prescription drugs, many of them without a prescription or medical evaluation. Columbia also indicates only two of the 187 sites offering prescription drugs for sale are certified by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy.

“Illicit internet drug sales continue to increase,” Gottwalt said. “We need this legislation to tackle the problem and stop other families from facing the tragedy that the Pearson family is living with. This bill will help save lives.”

Gottwalt began work to limit illicit online drug trafficking in 2007 after Dan Pearson contacted him. Gottwalt took one step forward with a 2007 bill he authored to define legally valid prescriptions (HF1849). “Justin’s Bill,” developed over the summer by a broad-based working group, goes further by defining more clearly the requirements for a valid, legal prescription. The new legislation is on the leading edge nationally and could serve as a model for other states.

“This law does not seek to limit legitimate online sales of prescription drugs,” Marty said. “It simply does a better job of detailing the medical assessment necessary to support a legal, valid prescription, giving law enforcement authorities the tool they need to crack down on pharmacies in our state that choose to distribute powerful prescription drugs to people who’ve done little more than fill out an online order form.”

Gottwalt said the Minnesota Board of Pharmacy, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Federal Drug Administration all have indicated this bill is a significant step forward in helping them prevent illicit online drug trafficking.