



500 S. Main Street, Suite #410, Orange, CA 92868 | P: (714) 953-1300 | F: (714) 953-1302 | www.ACCOC.org

March 20, 2017

The Honorable Patricia Bates
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 4048
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 176 (Bates) Controlled substances: fentanyl and carfentanil. – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Bates,

The Association of California Cities – Orange County (ACC-OC) would like to express its support for Senate Bill 176 (Bates). SB 176 would take the important step of classifying carfentanil, a dangerous opioid, as a Schedule II drug, and impose additional fines and penalties for possession of both fentanyl and carfentanil. Currently, a person may be prosecuted for possession of a substance containing heroin or cocaine, if the substance exceeds a certain weight. SB 176 would amend the Health and Safety Code to include fentanyl and carfentanil in this category of drugs subject to enhancements by weight. ACC-OC is supportive of legislation that will help our local communities and local law enforcement address the tragic, growing epidemic of drug abuse, in an effort, to reduce overdose deaths.

Fentanyl has received significant national attention recently due to the sharp rise of fentanyl-related deaths across the country. As recently as this month, a county in Ohio, disturbingly, ran out of room at its morgue due to a massive surge in overdose deaths, many related to either fentanyl or carfentanil use. Canada is currently in the grips of a full-fledged fentanyl epidemic, with public safety and health officials unsure of how to address the problem. In light of such tragedies, it is important that California remain vigilant in taking steps to prevent such an epidemic. SB 176 smartly relies on the knowledge gained from previous drug crises, to craft legislation that will properly defining the severity level of carfentanil and assigning equitable penalties for the use, possession or selling of these opioids.

While many public officials are aware of the patterns of fentanyl abuse, carfentanil is currently less well-known. Federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) officials issued a warning in September 2016, alerting law enforcement and the public about the dangerous nature of carfentanil. The incredibly high potency and low manufacturing cost of carfentanil represent a clear danger, as drug cartels begin recognizing its usefulness as a heroin substitute or diluent. It is also odorless and colorless, making it extremely hard to detect. And with the documented increase of fentanyl activity in California spurred by the proliferation of fentanyl in other areas of the United States, the Orange County Sheriff's Department predicts that carfentanil will follow the same trend and expand its toll in California.



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Both fentanyl and carfentanil can be absorbed through the skin or accidentally inhaled, making them incredibly dangerous to first responders rushing to save an overdose victim. The importance of protecting the safety of the men and women who serve our communities as first responders cannot be overstated. SB 176 takes the commonsense step of adding the same penalty enhancements for fentanyl and carfentanil as heroin, thereby protecting unknowing users, first responders, and children.

The health and safety of California's cities is of paramount importance to ACC-OC. For this and the reasons described above, the Association of California Cities – Orange County is proud to support SB 176. Should you have any questions about our position or about ACC-OC, please contact ACC-OC's Legislative Affairs Director, Diana Coronado, at (714) 953-1300 or at dcoronado@accoc.org.

Sincerely,

Heather Stratman
Chief Executive Officer
Association of California Cities – Orange County