

Regular Session, 2013

HOUSE STUDY REQUEST NO. 6

BY REPRESENTATIVE HILL

HEALTH CARE: Requests a study of the feasibility and practicality of limiting the sale of products containing dextromethorphan

1 A STUDY REQUEST

2 To the House Committee on Health and Welfare to study the feasibility and practicality of
3 limiting the sale of products containing dextromethorphan and to report its findings
4 to the House of Representatives prior to the convening of the 2014 Regular Session
5 of the Legislature of Louisiana.

6 WHEREAS, dextromethorphan is a cough suppressant that is available, alone and
7 in combination with other nonprescription medications, in syrup, pill, and softgel form in
8 a wide variety of nonprescription products; and

9 WHEREAS, when used properly, cough medicines that contain dextromethorphan
10 have a long history of being safe and effective; and

11 WHEREAS, abuse of dextromethorphan at high doses can produce hallucinations,
12 rapid heart beat, high blood pressure, loss of consciousness, and seizures; and

13 WHEREAS, the dangers multiply when dextromethorphan is abused with alcohol,
14 prescription drugs, or narcotics; and

15 WHEREAS, dextromethorphan is inexpensive, legal, and readily accessible, which
16 has contributed to the increased abuse of that drug, particularly among teenagers; and

17 WHEREAS, increasing numbers of teens and others are abusing dextromethorphan
18 by ingesting it in excessive quantities; and

19 WHEREAS, prolonged use at high doses can lead to psychological dependence on
20 the drug; and

1 WHEREAS, abuse of dextromethorphan can also cause impaired judgment, which
2 can lead to injury or death; and

3 WHEREAS, dextromethorphan abuse increased by a factor of ten during the period
4 of 1999 through 2004, with an increase by a factor of fifteen among children aged nine to
5 seventeen years; and

6 WHEREAS, an estimated two million four hundred thousand teenagers, or one in
7 every ten teenagers, abused over-the-counter cough medicines in 2005; and

8 WHEREAS, children ages nine to seventeen years are the fastest growing group of
9 dextromethorphan abusers; and

10 WHEREAS, the Food and Drug Administration has called the abuse of
11 dextromethorphan a "serious issue" and a "disturbing new trend" that can cause death as well
12 as other serious adverse events such as brain damage, seizure, loss of consciousness, and
13 irregular heartbeat; and

14 WHEREAS, prevention is a key component of addressing the rise in the abuse of
15 legal medications; and

16 WHEREAS, a number of methods to address the problem of dextromethorphan abuse
17 have been suggested, including the following: prohibiting the sale of products containing
18 dextromethorphan to minors, limiting the quantity of products containing dextromethorphan
19 that may be purchased at one time by any individual, requiring warning signs where products
20 containing dextromethorphan are sold at retail, restricting the display of products containing
21 dextromethorphan, and prohibiting the sale, over the Internet or by any other means, of
22 dextromethorphan powder that has been extracted from cough syrup; and

23 WHEREAS, before deciding whether to take any action regarding this matter of
24 public health concern, the House of Representatives should have as much information as
25 possible concerning the steps that must be taken to ensure that any action it may take would
26 be enforceable and in conformity with any applicable federal requirements; and

27 WHEREAS, the House Committee on Health and Welfare may seek input from
28 interested stakeholders, including but not limited to the Department of Health and Hospitals,
29 the Louisiana Board of Pharmacy, the Louisiana District Attorneys Association, the
30 Louisiana Public Defender Board, the Louisiana Sheriffs' Association, the Louisiana State

1 Police, the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Criminal
2 Justice, the Louisiana Public Defenders Association, the Louisiana Association of Criminal
3 Defense Lawyers, and the office of the attorney general.

4 THEREFORE, the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana requests
5 the House Committee on Health and Welfare to study the feasibility and practicality of
6 limiting the sale of products containing dextromethorphan and to report its findings to the
7 House of Representatives prior to the convening of the 2014 Regular Session of the
8 Legislature of Louisiana.

DIGEST

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