

Subcommittee Hearing Statement

**Prescription Drug Abuse: What is Being Done to
Address this New Drug Epidemic?**

**U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Government Reform
Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources
2154 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC
July 26, 2006**

The Consumer Healthcare Products Association (CHPA) appreciates the opportunity to submit this written statement to the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources.

CHPA is the national trade association representing over 200 companies and organizations who are involved in the manufacturing, distribution, and promotion of nonprescription or over-the-counter (OTC) medicines. While several of our members also produce and distribute prescription medicines, this statement is submitted on behalf of the nonprescription side of the industry.

Dextromethorphan (DXM) is a safe and effective ingredient found in well over 100 over-the-counter cough and cold medicines. First approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 1954, DXM is an effective, non-narcotic cough suppressant that works by raising the coughing threshold in the brain. It is the most widely used cough suppressant in the United States, has no pain relieving properties, and is not addictive. While dextromethorphan is used safely by millions of Americans each year to relieve coughs due to the common cold or flu, some teenagers and young adults are intentionally abusing large quantities of medicines containing dextromethorphan (up to 25 times the recommended dose) in an effort to get high.

The makers of nonprescription medicines take very seriously the intentional abuse of its products and sought out the experts at the Partnership for a Drug-Free America (the Partnership) for assistance in combating this problem. Together, CHPA and the Partnership began an ongoing initiative in 2003 to ensure that adults with influence and oversight of young people are

**Consumer Healthcare
Products Association**

900 19th Street, NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20006

T 202.429.9260 F 202.223.6835
www.chpa-info.org

aware that teens may be considering abusing medicines containing dextromethorphan. In addition to educating key audiences regarding the potential for abuse of OTC medicines containing dextromethorphan, CHPA, the Partnership, and the American Medical Association launched the Rx and OTC Medicine Abuse Education Campaign on May 16, 2006. This education campaign will be presented in greater detail at today's hearing by the Partnership's President and CEO Stephen J. Pasierb.

CHPA believes that there is also something that Congress can do prevent the abuse of dextromethorphan: **support HR 5280, the Dextromethorphan Distribution Act of 2006.** In addition to Rx and OTC medicine abuse, young people also have discovered that they can get the raw, unfinished, powdered form of dextromethorphan online. Teenagers and young adults are purchasing this bulk form of dextromethorphan on the Internet and ingesting it alone or with other drugs and alcohol. This type of abuse is particularly dangerous because it is the pure form of the drug. On May 20, 2005, FDA issued a talk paper warning against the sale of pure dextromethorphan in powdered form that is encapsulated by the "dealer" and offered for street use. The FDA paper acknowledged that dextromethorphan is generally recognized as safe and effective when ingested at recommended dosing levels.

Introduced on a bi-partisan basis by Congressman Fred Upton and Congressman Rick Larsen, H.R. 5280 would allow FDA to promulgate regulations on the sale of unfinished dextromethorphan and limit the distribution of the bulk ingredient to only those persons or entities which are registered with FDA. This important legislation would cut-off the supply of pure dextromethorphan to those who are using it to get high or who intend to sell it as a street drug. The bill now has 13 cosponsors and has been referred to the House Committee on Energy & Commerce. CHPA strongly commends Congressman Upton and Congressman Larsen for their leadership on this important issue.

The makers of OTC medicines are committed to stopping both of these types of abuse of dextromethorphan, and we appreciate the opportunity of sharing this information with the subcommittee.