

Jim Testimony Tianeptine ONLY March 26 2024.pdf

Uploaded by: Jim Alvey

Position: FAV

Jim Alvey
Bill 1230
In Person Testimony
3/26/2024

My name is Jim Alvey . I'm here in support of Bill 1230.

“Gas Station Heroin” - **Kratom, Tianeptine and Phenibut** - took over my son's life and his addiction to them eventually lead to his death at age 33. This bill seeks to prevent this from happening to others, specifically regarding Tianeptine, for those under the age of 21.

Let me tell you about my son -

We called him “JT”. He was a Spirit of Columbia scholarship winner and graduated with honors from University of NC (one of the happiest days of my life) and was accepted into the Johns Hopkins School of Business. He had a successful IT career and was blessed with talent, intellect, looks, strength, and a heart of gold. He was and still is my pride and joy. His death broke many hearts. Over 250 family and friends attended his memorial.

But he suffered from anxiety and other behavioral challenges. He sought out products like **Kratom** to relieve stress without any legal consequences. When he built up tolerance and **Kratom** wasn't enough, he turned to **Tianeptine and Phenibut**. **Tianeptine** is sold at gas stations and online under names like “**ZaZa Red,**” and “**Neptune's Elixir**”.

Websites and packaging claim these drugs treat anxiety and depression, improve memory, increase mental alertness and concentration, and boost energy levels. In fact, these drugs have no legitimate medical use and do not meet the FDA's definition of a dietary supplement.

Instead, I saw them cause JT to have **rapid heart rate, vomiting, seizures, loss of consciousness, and even putting him into a coma.**

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I also witnessed **depression, anxiety, shakes, and sleep disorders** in his attempts at quitting... symptoms JT thought these drugs would help him with... instead he told us withdrawal from Tianeptine felt “like death”.

To avoid withdrawals, these pills must be taken every 2-3 hours!

Still, Tianeptine is virtually unknown in the health space. Nobody tests, so nobody knows. Maryland needs to correct this, at least in our state.

6 months before he died, JT left a rehab to try to kick his addictions on his own. He got a hotel room and bought **Tianeptine**. He was alone, had seizures, hit his head so hard it cracked his skull and left a gaping hole, broke his foot, and fell into a coma. I personally saw the blood-stained room this happened in and cleared out his personal belongings. There were **Tianeptine pills and bottles** everywhere!

JT was in a coma almost a week at Maryland Shock Trauma but miraculously survived this episode. Surely, we thought, he must have hit rock bottom.

But sadly, his addiction called him back and when the same chain of events occurred 6 months later, he was found dead in a Days Inn in Cambridge, MD.

So, to me and my wife - this bill (with amendments) will bring a small sense of relief, that JT’s death can save other’s lives. We need to get this drug out of stores and make it illegal to sell under any circumstances.

9 states have made Tianeptine illegal - **Alabama and Kentucky** have even labeled **Tianeptine** a Schedule 1 substance. **Where is Maryland on this list?**

This bill (with amendments) is a GIANT step forward. A \$5,000 penalty vs. selling a drug that led to JT’s death is not nearly what we would want. But we cannot get our son back. Please vote **YES** on this bill and join other states that have done that.

Next session, we can tackle Phenibut – the other OTC drug that led to his death.

NCADD-MD - 2024 HB 1230 FAV - Tianeptine - Senate.

Uploaded by: Nancy Rosen-Cohen

Position: FAV



Senate Finance Committee

March 26, 2024

House Bill 1230 – Public Health – Tianeptine Consumer Protection Act

Support

NCADD-Maryland supports House Bill 1230 as amended in the House. This bill would prohibit the sale of products containing tianeptine.

Tianeptine is an antidepressant medication that is not approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Clinical effects of tianeptine misuse and withdrawal can mimic opioid toxicity and withdrawal.¹ The FDA has issued a warning urging consumers not to purchase or use tianeptine products due to serious risks including seizures, loss of consciousness and death.²

While not FDA-approved for use in the United States, this product is readily purchased online or at gas stations, and informally referred to as “gas station heroin.”³ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warn that consumers should avoid all products containing tianeptine, including those claiming to treat an ailment or disorder.⁴

Because this is a dangerous substance that is completely unapproved and unregulated, NCADD-Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 1230.

¹ Characteristics of Tianeptine Exposures Reported to the National Poison Data System — United States, 2000–2017

Weekly / August 3, 2018 / 67(30);815–818; Tharwat El Zahran, MD1,2; Joshua Schier, MD1,2; Emily Glidden, MPH1; Stephanie Kieszak, MPH1; Royal Law, PhD1; Edward Bottei, MD3; Cynthia Aaron, MD4; Andrew King, MD4; Arthur Chang, MD1 (VIEW AUTHOR AFFILIATIONS)

² Food and Drug Administration. Tianeptine products linked to serious harms, overdose, death. Silver Spring, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services, Food and Drug Administration; 2022. <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/tianeptine-products-linked-serious-harm-overdoses-death>

³ Clark D. ‘Gas station heroin’ is addictive and, in some cases, deadly. Chicago, IL: NewsNation; 2023. <https://www.newsnationnow.com/health/gas-station-heroin-tianeptine-addictive-withdrawl>

⁴ Christopher J. Counts, MD1,2; Anthony V. Spadaro, MD1,2; Trevor A. Cerbini, MD1,2; Alex J. Krotulski3; Howard A. Greller, MD1,2; Lewis S. Nelson, MD1,2; Bruce E. Ruck, PharmD2; Diane P. Calello, MD1,2 (VIEW AUTHOR AFFILIATIONS)

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

March 26, 2024

The Honorable Pamela Beidle Chair,
Senate Finance Committee 3 East,
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: House Bill 1230 – Public Health - Tianeptine Consumer Protection Act – Letter of Support as Amended

Dear Chair Beidle and Committee members:

The Maryland Department of Health (Department) respectfully submits this letter of support as amended for House Bill (HB) 1230 – Public Health - Tianeptine Consumer Protection Act. This bill will prohibit retailers from advertising, preparing, distributing, selling, or exposing for sale tianeptine products, and imposes a fine and potential imprisonment for violation of this section.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates food, drugs, and dietary supplements at the Federal Level. The FDA has not approved any prescription or over-the-counter drug products containing tianeptine. There are no drug products containing tianeptine that are legally on the market in the U.S., and the FDA has warned against the use of unapproved tianeptine products for medical treatment. In addition, the FDA has determined tianeptine is not appropriate for use as a dietary ingredient in dietary supplements, as there is insufficient evidence that it can be considered safe. Finally, for that same reason, the FDA has advised that tianeptine may not be used as a food ingredient.

The Department has the utmost interest in making sure Marylanders are not exposed (intentionally or otherwise) to potentially dangerous foods, dietary supplements, and unapproved medications. With the adopted amendments, the Department strongly supports this legislation as a way to protect Marylanders and Maryland's youth from unsafe products in the State. The Department thanks the sponsor for bringing this bill forward and for the adoption of the amendments.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary