



Greater Valley Substance Abuse Action Council
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March 6, 2012

Public Health Committee
Room 3000, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Attn: Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and Members of the Public Health Committee

Re: Testimony in **Support of HB 5063** – An Act Concerning Treatment for a Drug Overdose

My name is Pamela Mautte, and I am the Director of the Greater Valley Substance Abuse Action Council. I am writing this testimony in support of HB 5063 in which the legislation provides crucial clarification to clinical and public health programs that want to implement or expand naloxone prescribing to prevent overdose deaths. This bill seeks to:

- Permit prescription of naloxone to **anyone**—not just those who consider themselves “drug users” --at risk of opioid overdose or who may respond to a witnessed overdose. This would allow chronic pain patients who may be at risk of opioid overdose due to their health condition as well as parents, caregivers, law enforcement, other first responders, and drug treatment staff to be prescribed naloxone for reversing opioid overdose. Permitting broader access to naloxone could prevent these events from becoming fatal.
- Clarify for prescribers that they will not be held liable for the administration of naloxone to an overdose victim. This addition is critical to support the prescribing of naloxone by clinicians. After more than 15 years of prescribing naloxone in the United States, there are **no known cases of malpractice or disciplinary action against health professionals associated with the prescription of naloxone.** This stands in contrast to the unprecedented deluge of malpractice lawsuits, licensing restrictions, and unnecessary deaths associated with overprescribing of prescription opioid medications to patients.

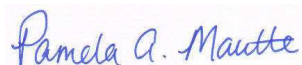
My Regional Action Council (RAC) oversees alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use prevention efforts within the 11 towns including: Ansonia, Bethany, Derby, Orange, Oxford, Milford, New Haven, Seymour, Shelton, West Haven, and Woodbridge. In my role as Director, I have heard from many parents, grandparents, spouses, children, and residents who have lost loved ones from opioid overdose deaths. These deaths could have been prevented had family members been aware of their loved ones “secret addiction” to opioids like heroin and oxycodone.

This past year, VSAAC was instrumental in the support of a study funded by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) with principal investigator Traci Green, PhD, MSc, Assistant Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology, the Warren Alpert School of Medicine at Brown University. Based on the premise that **drug overdoses in CT are the leading cause of adult injury and death (out-numbering the combined deaths resulting from motor vehicle accidents, fire and firearms)** the study sought to identify issues that surround these overdose injuries and deaths. Two communities in CT were selected to be part of the study which aimed to determine and understand why high rates of prescription opioid abuse and overdose is occurring in these communities. These communities include Ansonia and Wallingford. Some of the studies findings included:

- These deaths occur among 35-54 age range, primarily non-Hispanic Whites, (more than half female) (Ages 24-58 (primarily >35)
- Nearly all involved opioid medication prescribed to them
- Died at home, often with others in the house

By passing this legislation, Connecticut can reduce accidental overdoses and prevent overdose deaths in our state. HB 5063 encourages “safe opioid prescribing” by providers, and puts naloxone within safety’s reach for those at the highest risk of overdose death. Please support HB 5063 and prevent these unnecessary and untimely deaths in your community.

Respectfully Submitted,



Pamela A. Mautte
Director, VSAAC