



Connecticut's Statewide AIDS Coalition

**Testimony of Shawn M. Lang
Public Health Committee
7 March 2012
HB 5063**

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, members of the committee; I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today. I'm Shawn M. Lang, the Director of Public Policy with the CT AIDS Resource Coalition, Connecticut's only statewide HIV/AIDS organization. We work to ensure that the more than 10,000 people living with HIV/AIDS in our state have the housing, care and supportive services they need in order to live their lives in dignity.

I'm here to lend our support to HB 5063 AN ACT CONCERNING TREATMENT FOR A DRUG OVERDOSE.

Narcan saves lives; it's that simple. Similar to the epi-pen that people use to prevent an anaphylactic shock, Narcan's only use is to bring someone out of an opioid overdose. Opioids include heroin, morphine, fentanyl and, oxycodone.

Between 1997 – 2007, Connecticut experienced 2,231 opioid involved deaths. And nationwide, more 18 – 24 year olds die of drug overdoses than from motor vehicle accidents. You might recall, that just last month, a UCONN student overdosed on heroin while his girlfriend opted to hide the drugs and syringes before calling for help. Had she known about Narcan, and the Good Samaritan law that passed last session, that young man's death might have been avoided.

People sometimes express concern that supporting this bill might be construed as supporting drug use. First, this legislation is already on the books. We're just clarifying some language to make it more workable. Second, I can't think of anyone who supports drug use. But the sad fact is that people do use drugs, and many people who use become addicted. And drug addictions can sometimes lead to an overdose. Narcan simply prevents the loss of those lives and has no street value, no other use, no side effects, and no harmful effects if the person isn't overdosing on an opiate.

Narcan provides a 30 – 90 minutes window of opportunity to call 911 and get someone to the emergency room. This action can often make the difference for getting someone into treatment and back on track with their lives.

Remember the story I referenced earlier about the UCONN student who overdosed? Had he and his girlfriend had access to Narcan, he would still be alive. Many of us have family members with alcohol or drug problems. I know that if there was anything I could do to help them, I'd do it. This bill is the vehicle for that to happen.

Please support HB5063 so that lives can be saved. Thank you.