

Testimony in support of

**H.B. No. 5782 AN ACT ALLOWING PHARMACISTS TO DISPENSE OR ADMINISTER AN OPIOID ANTAGONIST TO TREAT OR PREVENT A DRUG OVERDOSE**

General Law Committee

17 February 2015

Senator Leone, Representative Baram, and members of the General Law Committee,

My name is Jeff Holland, I am a resident of New Canaan, and I am speaking on behalf of my local Regional Action Council, Communities 4 Action. I am here to give testimony in support of **HB5782- AN ACT ALLOWING PHARMACISTS TO DISPENSE OR ADMINISTER AN OPIOID ANTAGONIST TO TREAT OR PREVENT A DRUG OVERDOSE**

As part of the Connecticut Prevention Network, our organization has been working statewide with our regional partners in a multi-strategy approach to address the growing problem of prescription drug diversion and abuse, especially involving opioids. According to the CDC, overdose is now the leading cause of injury death. By reducing illicit access to opioids, reducing demand, and reducing harm, lives can be saved.

In 2010 we collaborated with the Department of Consumer Protection Drug Control Division to pilot a medication drop box collection program that is now statewide. This program ensures that household medications are disposed of responsibly, preventing potential misuse. We support the mandated use of the Prescription Monitoring Program, as well as prescriber education, to help reduce the overprescribing of opioids. Through programs like SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment) we work to ensure that individuals that have developed a dependence on these powerful medications are better identified and receive appropriate care.

However, even with these preventive strategies in place, there is still a need for harm reduction. During the last legislative session we worked together with Representative Tom O'Dea, and the CT Opioid Overdose Prevention Workgroup, of which we are a member, to ensure that anyone administering an opioid antagonist to reverse a suspected overdose would have Good Samaritan protection. And although many first responders in our state now routinely carry Naloxone, the antidote for an opioid overdose, witnesses to an overdose may not, and are sometimes reluctant to call 911. That is why we support expanded access to Naloxone through pharmacy dispensing.

Pharmacists are in a unique position to help reduce opioid overdose deaths by furnishing Naloxone. In recent policy statements, both the American Pharmacy Association and National Association of Boards of Pharmacy recognized the value of pharmacists in assuring optimal medication therapy, and stated support for the development and implementation of regulations that permit pharmacists to furnish reversal agents to prevent opioid-related deaths due to overdose. To that end, we ask that you support HB5782 and help to increase access to this safe, effective, life saving medication.

Jeff Holland