

**Written Testimony of Christopher Heneghan 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
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Senator Leone, Senator Larson, Representative Baram, Representative Kiner, and members of the committee, my name is Christopher Heneghan. From 2009 -2014, I served as the director of a community health organization in eastern Connecticut committed to addressing the harms associated with substance use. I am also a member of the CT Opioid Overdose Prevention Workgroup. We have been meeting for over two years to increase awareness about, and expand access to Naloxone, an opioid antagonist which counteracts the effects of an opioid overdose (e.g. heroin, oxycodone, morphine, fentanyl, or vicodin).

I am writing 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.**

It has been more than five years since the CDC announced that drug overdose deaths reached epidemic proportions in the United States. Almost 40,000 American lives are lost each year to this preventable tragedy. On average one Connecticut resident dies each day of an opioid overdose.

Most of us know at least one person in our own family, or who is close to us who has struggled with addiction. Many of us know somebody who has been personally affected by the overdose crisis in Connecticut.

Naloxone is an unscheduled drug with no abuse potential and a very favorable safety profile. Naloxone's only use is to bring someone out of an opioid overdose.

In the event of opioid overdose, the window of opportunity for a lifesaving intervention closes rapidly, often before EMS is able to respond. Friends or family members at the scene of an overdose have a critical opportunity to cast a safety net, extending that window for 30 – 90 minutes by administering Naloxone. This is long enough to call 911 and get a person into treatment and care which may help them get their lives back on track.

When I speak with people about expanding access to Naloxone in the state, some express concern that doing so may condone drug use. There is an extensive body of evidence to the contrary. In fact, studies have shown, Naloxone induces the same unpleasant symptoms that opioid dependent individuals are trying to stave off with their opioid use. People do not feel more comfortable using opioids more frequently or in higher doses because of Naloxone availability.

A compassionate and practical way for a friend or loved one of an opioid user to access Naloxone, is to be able to purchase it over the counter at a pharmacy. Pharmacists already act as prescribers and administrators with flu shots. With Naloxone, a pharmacist could dispense the recommended two doses of Naloxone and provide brief education on how to recognize an overdose and administer Naloxone. This practice saves lives, and is already common in Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. Your support for H.B. No. 5782 will ensure that our state keeps pace with our neighbors in addressing this public health crisis.

In response to this epidemic, I urge you to please support H.B. No. 5782. It is a bill that will ensure Connecticut residents struggling with substance use have an improved chance to get the help and support they need. Thank you.