

**Testimony for Committee on Insurance and Real Estate
On Proposed Bill (SB 21)
An Act Concerning Health Insurance Coverage of Abuse-Deterrent Opioid
Analgesics**

**By Jill Spinetti, President and CEO
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This problem [of prescription drug misuse, abuse and diversion] has cast a terrible shadow across our nation and led to a public health crisis of devastating proportions. It is a crisis that has affected us all, and meaningful and enduring solutions will require all of our collective efforts.

--Douglas C. Throckmorton, M.D., Food and Drug Administration, U. S. Department of Health and Human Services

Good afternoon, Senator Crisco, Representative Megna, and ranking members and members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee. My name is Jill Spinetti and I am the president and CEO of The Governor's Prevention Partnership. For over 25 years, our non-profit organization has created public-private partnerships that provide resources and services so that young people in our state can grow up free from substance abuse, underage drinking, violence, and bullying and be able to take their place in our future work force.

I'm here today in support of proposed Senate Bill No. 21 that would require health insurance policies to provide coverage for abuse-deterrent opioids in the same way that other formulas are covered. Abuse-deterrent opioids are another important tool that supports a comprehensive approach to curbing the prescription drug abuse epidemic that is devastating our communities in Connecticut.

The Governor's Prevention Partnership takes a strong stand in support of this issue because we have seen firsthand the devastating effects of prescription drug abuse on young people and their families, and we know that reducing the supply of prescription drugs that could be diverted for abuse and deterring their use are critical prevention strategies that are needed in our state.

Prescription drug abuse is a significant, growing problem in the state among young people.

11% of school students in Connecticut reported recently they have taken prescription medication to get high (2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey) and 60% of 12th graders report that they get their prescription narcotics from a friend or relative (2010 Monitoring the Future Survey from the University of Michigan.) This behavior has deadly consequences. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that overdose deaths involving prescription opioids quadrupled over a decade from 4,030 deaths in 1999 to 16,650 in 2010. To understand the magnitude of the problem, for every death, there are 10 treatment admissions for abuse, 32 ER visits for misuse or abuse, 130 people who abuse or are dependent, and 825 nonmedical users. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Unintentional Injury Prevention "Policy Impact: Prescription Painkiller Overdoses").

Abuse deterrent opioids are associated with annual medical cost savings

One study found that opioid abusers were 11.2 times more likely to have had at least one mental health outpatient visit and 12.2 times more likely to have had at least one hospital inpatient stay than non-abusers and were four times more likely to have had an emergency room visit than non-abusers. [White AG, et. al., Direct costs of opioid abuse in an insured population in the United States., Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy 2005, 11:469-479] Reducing opioid abuse through abuse deterrent formulas could decrease these costs.

A recent national government study cited that reformulated extended-release oxycodone was associated with annual medical cost savings of \$430 million in the U.S. [National Center for Biotechnology Information, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24559196>]. In the study, health insurance claims data was examined and the study provides evidence that reformulated oxycodone has been associated with reductions in abuse rates and substantial medical costs.

A move by insurance companies to cover abuse deterrent opioids is the right move for Connecticut now. It has the potential to save lives and money, is good public policy, and demonstrates support for Connecticut's deliberate and multifaceted approach to stemming the tide of prescription drug abuse.

Passage of this bill will send a strong message that Connecticut is serious and committed to remaining among the top states in the country for offering every solution possible to save lives and reduce risk associated with prescription drug abuse and misuse.

Thank you.

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