



Testimony in support of  
The Governor's Budget Funding the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program  
Appropriations Committee  
25 February 2015

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and members of the committee, my name is Shawn Lang, and I'm the Deputy Director of Programs and Policy with AIDS CT, CT's only statewide organization whose sole focus is HIV/AIDS. I also convened and chair the CT Opioid Overdose Prevention Workgroup, which has been meeting for over two years to increase awareness about, and expand access to Naloxone, and opioid antagonist which reverses opiate overdoses.

The Opioid Overdose Prevention Workgroup is statewide and has multi-disciplinary, cross department participation. The workgroup is open and current participating partners include the Connecticut Departments of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Public Health, and Correction; the Connecticut Prevention Network; APT Foundation; AIDS Connecticut; Walgreen; researchers from Yale and Brown Universities; Recovery Network of Programs; and Medical Doctors. The goals of the group are to raise awareness about Naloxone, provide education to prescribers to increase access to and availability of Naloxone, and look at other states policies to continue to make additional positive changes here in CT.

I'm here to testify in support of **the Governor's Proposed Funding for the Substance Abuse and Opioid Overdose Prevention Initiative in the Department of Consumer Protection's budget.**

This funding would be used to strengthen oversight of our state's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP), which is sorely needed.

From 2009 –2014, there were **over 2,000 accidental and unintentional opioid involved deaths that occurred in 150 of our 169 cities and towns.** In the past, heroin deaths stayed steady while deaths attributed to prescription opiates rose. In our preliminary analysis of current data, we've seen a change in that trend with Heroin deaths rising. The simple explanation is that Oxycodone was reformulated in 2011 to make it more difficult to crush it in order to snort or inject it, so people who had become addicted to prescription opiates turned to Heroin which is cheaper, plentiful and easier to purchase.

Addiction is a multi-faceted and complex issue that requires a choice of treatment options, as well as a coordinated, multi-pronged approach.

While the majority of prescription opioid users do not become heroin users, research found that approximately 3 out of 4 new heroin users report having abused prescription opioids prior to using heroin.

Establishing, strengthening and monitoring an effective Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, with uniform data collection elements that could be shared across state lines, would be a strong, frontline defense.

Currently, while **prescribers are required to register** for the PDMP, only approximately 20% do. And, of that 20%, even fewer utilize it. This makes it much easier for someone seeking opiates to get prescriptions across multiple providers and across state lines.

Please join us in supporting this funding proposal to strengthen our state's roll in addressing the opiate addiction epidemic.

Thank you.

**Shawn M. Lang, Deputy Director of Programs and Policy, AIDS CT**  
**860.247.2437 X319**  
**[slang@aids-ct.org](mailto:slang@aids-ct.org)**