



## Middlesex County Substance Abuse Action Council

A Council of the Business Industry Foundation of Middlesex County  
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Testimony of Betsey S. Chadwick, MCSAAC  
to the Committee on Children regarding

*HB 5301: An Act Concerning Opioid Analgesic Prescriptions Issued to Minors*

March 3, 2016

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and Honorable Members of the Committee on Children:

Thank you for the opportunity to express my concerns about *HB 5301*, a timely bill that would help ensure productive conversations between parents and doctors before children are prescribed opioid medications for pain.

I have read the submitted testimonies to your committee and spoken with parents of adolescents about *HB 5301*. Those in favor of the bill want to reduce the risk of opioid abuse among minors. Those opposed to this bill want exactly the same thing. The only difference seems to be their level of concern with language in the final few subdivisions of the bill; that is, with the requirement for written consent and certifying statements

We want to encourage open discussion between medical providers and patient families. We want parents to be knowledgeable about these incredibly powerful drugs before their children take them. Therefore, the bill's provision for written consent and a signed statement from parents and providers (subsection 4) is an important one. It may pose an additional burden of paperwork on hospitals and other medical providers, but we believe that the risk of youthful opioid misuse and abuse poses too great a threat to leave to chance.

Subdivisions 1-4 of subsection (b), which **exempt** the vast majority of doctors and dentists who prescribe opioids to youth from having to do this paperwork, we think, is misguided. Please consider removing these exemptions.

By and large, children and teenagers enjoy good health. They are prescribed opioids because of an emergency (e.g., sports injury), or inpatient surgery (e.g., appendectomy), or outpatient surgery (e.g., tooth extraction). Why then should such occasions (emergencies and surgeries) be specifically exempt? Why shouldn't a prescribing physician or dentist be required to follow the law and obtain written consent and a signed statement of parental understanding?

Please consider the deletion of the exemptions in this bill before its passage. Thank you.