

Testimony in support of H.B. No. 5301

AN ACT CONCERNING OPIOID ANALGESIC PRESCRIPTIONS ISSUED TO MINORS

Committee on Children

March 3, 2016

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and members of the Committee on Children,

My name is Jeff Holland and I am a resident of New Canaan. I am writing as a member and on behalf of my Regional Action Council, Communities4Action. I am giving testimony in support of HB5301-

AN ACT CONCERNING OPIOID ANALGESIC PRESCRIPTIONS ISSUED TO MINORS

As part of the Connecticut Prevention Network (CPN), our organization has been working statewide with our regional partners in a multi-strategy approach to combat the growing problem of prescription drug diversion and abuse, especially involving opioids. As reported by 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. This bill provides another important tool to address this public health epidemic, one that the White House Director of Drug Policy Michael Botticelli calls “an epidemic that starts in the medicine cabinet”.

In 2010 we collaborated with the Department of Consumer Protection Drug Control Division to pilot a medication drop box collection program that is now established statewide in police department lobbies. This program ensures that unneeded household medications are disposed of responsibly, preventing potential misuse. We supported legislation mandating the use of the Prescription Monitoring Program, as well as mandated prescriber education, to help reduce the overprescribing of opioids.

However, even with these preventive strategies in place, the misuse and diversion of these opioid analgesics remains a problem, a problem that parents can take an active role in combatting. This bill, as drafted, helps to ensure that parents are informed about the risks associated with the medications being prescribed to their minor children, medications that in some cases are chemically similar to powerfully addictive illicit drugs such as heroin. But although the bill requires a discussion of the very real risks of overdose and dependence, we would also like to see secure medication storage and disposal be required in the conversation, as well as the very serious consequences of allowing these medications to be used by anyone other than the individual to whom they were prescribed. Most young people that are abusing prescription medications report having taken them from a family member or friend. It is here, at home, that parents can have a real impact in ending this prescription drug abuse epidemic.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony,

Jeff Holland

Communities4Action

However, even with these preventive strategies in place, there is still a need for harm reduction. During the last two legislative sessions we worked to ensure that anyone administering an opioid antagonist to reverse a suspected overdose would have Good Samaritan protection, and to improve access to Naloxone through pharmacist prescribing.