



Testimony of Pamela Mautte
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H.B. No. 5301 AN ACT CONCERNING OPIOID ANALGESIC PRESCRIPTIONS ISSUED TO MINORS

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and members of the Children’s Committee, my name is Pamela Mautte and I am the director at BHcare’s Greater Valley Substance Abuse Action Council in Ansonia and a member of the Connecticut Prevention Network. I am here today to **support H.B. 5301 An Act Concerning Opioid Analgesic Prescriptions Issued to Minors.**

The proposed bill implements important safeguards that can help decrease the growing opioid epidemic in CT and the country. Did you know that adolescents are at higher risk for developing a substance use disorder than adults? In fact the earlier kids begin using, the higher their risk. According to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University 9 out of 10 people who meet the clinical criteria for substance use disorders involving nicotine, alcohol or other drugs began smoking, drinking or using other drugs before they turned 18. People who begin using any addictive substance before age 15 are **six and a half times as likely to develop a substance use disorder as those who delay use until age 21 or older** (28.1 percent vs. 4.3 percent).¹ The aforementioned bill is an effective strategy that will help decrease the opioid epidemic here in CT.

This bill is important because there is tremendous benefits to having medical professionals to assess for mental health and substance use disorders before prescribing opioid medications. Research has shown that opioid medication abuse is associated with mood disorders such as depression and anxiety, and that people may abuse these drugs to alleviate their symptoms. By checking the patients history and implementing brief screening and intervention for substance abuse and mental health conditions prior to prescribing, we can identify previous or new issues and can use better prescribing practices such as using opioid medication only when medically

necessary. As I mentioned before medical professionals, this needs to be inclusive of all medical professionals such as but not limited to dentists and oral surgeons. Many times youth are prescribed narcotic pain medication for oral surgeries such as wisdom tooth extraction. This is only one example, but all medical professionals need to be comfortable implementing screenings and education and have the tools and training to do so effectively. This is an important preventive measure. In addition providing patient and caregiver education is another important step about the potential for addiction. Again, research has shown that opioid medications have intrinsic abuse and addiction liability, particularly if they are used for non-medical purposes.

In my role as a Regional Action Council director, I have heard from young adults in recovery that their substance abuse disorder began after taking opioid based medication for pain from an injury or illness. Many parents have shared the same types of stories. Parental consent and the other outlined preventative measures can truly have significant impact in reducing opioid abuse and decreasing the epidemic.

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