



Testimony of Robert Rudewicz

Director, Substance Abuse Action Council of Central CT and member of The Connecticut Prevention Network

**In Support of**

**An Act Concerning Opioid Analgesic Prescriptions Issued to Minors**

**House Bill No. 5301**

My name is Robert Rudewicz and I am the Director of the Substance Abuse Action Council of Central CT and a member of the CT Prevention Network (CPN.) CPN is made up of the 13 Regional Action Councils statewide. I am also a retired police officer.

I am offering this testimony in support of **House Bill No. 5301 An Act Concerning Opioid Analgesic Prescriptions Issued to Minors** that will require prescribing practitioners to obtain parental consent for opioid analgesic prescriptions issued to patients under the age of eighteen.

According to the American Society of Addiction Medicine, Drug overdose is the leading cause of accidental death in the US, with 47,055 lethal drug overdoses in 2014. Opioid addiction is driving this epidemic, with 18,893 overdose deaths related to prescription pain relievers.

In 2014, 467,000 adolescents were current nonmedical users of pain reliever, with 168,000 having an addiction to prescription pain relievers.

Youth often share their unused pain relievers, unaware of the dangers of nonmedical opioid use. Many adolescents who misuse prescription pain relievers are given them for free by a friend or relative.

In a recent National Institute on Drug Abuse funded study, researchers found that the strongest predictor of initiating heroin use were the non-oral use of prescription opioids ( sniffing / snorting). Early age of onset of illicit prescription opioid use was also a predictor of heroin initiation. The researchers conclude in this study that “The results provide insights into targets for the design of urgently needed prevention interventions.”

Requiring parental consent for opioid prescriptions issued to patients under the age of eighteen is a right step in the prevention direction. As a prevention practitioner and former police officer I have seen the value in the long term effects of prevention strategies. For example, neighborhoods have been renewed and made safe as a result of a concept called “target hardening” whereby areas vulnerable to crime have been strengthened through environmental design.

Adolescents and teens are vulnerable to addiction, especially through means that are perceived as “legal” and “safe”. It is quite natural for teens to want to experiment with drugs. Requiring prescribers to get parental consent for opioids issued to minors will redesign , strengthen and “harden” the prevention environment of opioid use and abuse among those under the age of 18.

I urge you to support this bill and allow parents the opportunity to give informed consent.