

**Barbara Henry
First Selectman
Town of Roxbury
Before the Public Health Committee
February 16, 2016**

Re: HB-5053 - AN ACT INCREASING ACCESS TO OVERDOSE REVERSAL DRUGS.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of **HB-5053 - AN ACT INCREASING ACCESS TO OVERDOSE REVERSAL DRUGS.**

Increasing access to life-saving opioid antagonists will help reduce the number of untimely deaths in Connecticut. Not only as an EMT in my community, but as a First Selectman who listens to the dispatch radio during the day, I can attest to the increased number of opioid overdoses our emergency services and police in mutual aid towns deal with on a daily basis.

Last year, the legislature adopted Public Act 15-198, a comprehensive bill which includes provisions authorizing pharmacists to prescribe opioid antagonists if they receive special training and certification to do so. It also requires health care providers to complete continuing education in issues relating to the prescription of controlled substances and pain management medications.

Unfortunately, a recent report released by the Chief Medical Examiner's Office indicates that drug-related overdoses have increased significantly – more than 720 in 2015. And this year, we have already heard about many tragic deaths related to heroin overdoses. This is heartbreaking.

HB-5053 will ensure that each town includes provisions in its emergency medical services plan to ensure that providers are equipped with opioid antagonists and trained in how to administer the treatment. It also ensures that health insurance restrictions don't create obstacles in obtaining the overdose reversal drugs.

These are small steps that will expand on Connecticut's efforts to combat drug abuse through prevention, education and providing greater access to opioid antagonist medications.