



**Testimony
Kathryn Dube
Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST)
Before the Public Health Committee
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The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) appreciates the opportunity to comment in support of **HB-5053 - AN ACT INCREASING ACCESS TO OVERDOSE REVERSAL DRUGS**, which builds on Connecticut's efforts to combat opioid overdoses.

Communities throughout Connecticut are struggling to address concerns regarding the tragic increase in deaths associated with opioid use and addiction. According to statistics released by the Chief Medical Examiner's Office, the number of people dying from drug overdoses in 2015 continued to escalate, with more than 720 reported overdoses, and heroin related deaths "climbing at alarming rates". Clearly, increasing access to overdose reversal drugs is critical to saving lives in Connecticut.

This proposal builds on Public Act 15-198 adopted last session which authorizes pharmacists to prescribe opioid antagonists, used to treat drug overdoses, if they receive special training and certification to do so, and requires physicians, advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), dentists, and physician assistants (PAs) to take continuing education in prescribing controlled substances and pain management, among other important measures.

Recognizing that access to and training in how to administer opioid antagonists is critical to saving lives, many municipalities have already taken important steps to ensure that their community is fully equipped to respond in these situations. By requiring all municipalities to update their emergency medical services plan to include provisions ensuring that providers are equipped and trained, this bill recognizes that opioid abuse affects all of our communities and that we must work together to enact measures to prevent tragic overdoses.

The bill also ensures that individual or group health insurance requirements/restrictions will not impede access to opioid antagonists. This is a small but important change that will assist in increasing access to overdose reversal drugs.

COST is an advocacy organization committed to giving small towns a strong voice in the legislative process. Its members are Connecticut towns with populations of less than 30,000. COST champions the major policy needs and concerns of Connecticut's suburban and rural towns.