



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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Public Testimony
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RANKING MEMBER
HOUSING COMMITTEE

MEMBER
ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE
INSURANCE COMMITTEE

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 353

Good Morning Co-Chairs Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter; Vice Chairs Senator Crisco, Representative Riley; Ranking Members Senator Markley, Representative Srinivasan; and esteemed members of the Committee.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 353: An Act Concerning Opioid Abuse.

It's no surprise to anyone here there is an opiate crisis in Connecticut and in our nation. Literally, every corner of our state has experienced a spike in opiate/heroin addiction and overdose deaths. We along with members of the legislature have hosted forums with our communities, law enforcement, addiction professionals, prevention councils and support groups and the news is frightening.

We've learned opiate use produces a powerful addiction that turns good people into shells of their former selves. Opiate addiction is destroying families and lives across our country. It is a serious epidemic that will require everyone working together to stop this scourge.

Research has shown a direct link to the introduction of the pharmaceutical drugs, OxyContin, and related drugs to the explosion of opiate/heroin addictions cross this country. This drug was originally developed to help seriously ill individuals, then for those with chronic pain, to being prescribed for dental procedures and for what seems like minor pain or procedures.

The data is crystal clear linking opiate prescription drugs to the epidemic of opiate addiction.

We don't believe there's one law or action that can stop this crisis, but rather a series of changes from Federal, State, Local governments, the medical community, addiction and prevention professionals, communities and families all working together to change this deadly course.

We have sent proposals that we believe could be helpful:

- 1) Ensure appropriate and proper prescribing of opiate drugs
- 2) Require a rider or special certificate to prescribe opiate drugs
- 3) Require addiction training for medical professionals who prescribe opiates
- 4) Set up secure drop off boxes for unused drugs in all local pharmacies
- 5) Reduce the prescription amount of opiate drugs, limiting first time refills to a 72 hour supply
- 6) Make Narcan available over the counter

We have also submitted a request to the Judiciary Committee to establish a crime of murder by sale of an opiate controlled substance to hold drug dealers liable for the sale of drugs that result in the death of the person who purchased the lethal drugs. "Death by Dealer"

As well as a request to the Insurance Committee to require addiction treatment coverage and to increase the amount of beds available in the state for detox and treatment.

We also would like to see the Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services develop and release a large scale prevention and support campaign with PSA's (Public Service Announcements) on TV, Internet, Radio and Print sharing the serious danger of opiate addiction, similar to the campaign against smoking cigarettes. We also believe support groups are an important part of addressing this crisis. Families of addicts need support with help understanding the problem and learning how to help their loved ones. People, young and older find themselves caught up in the disease of addiction and they need all of our help to save their lives.

We understand this problem didn't happen overnight, and won't be solved quickly, however, we do believe if as a society we can work together to do everything we can to stop this cycle of addiction and death.

I am available to answer any questions the Committee may have.