

Insurance and Real Estate Committee  
February 27, 2020

Testimony in Support of:

*H.B. No. 5248, H.B. No. 5254, An Act Establishing A Task Force To Study Health Insurance Coverage for Peer Support Services In This State.*

*H.B. No. 5254, An Act Requiring Health Insurance Coverage For Medication-Assisted Treatment For Opioid Use Disorder*

*H.B. No. 5256 An Act Concerning Required Health Insurance Coverage For Detoxification And Substance Abuse Services*

Co-Chairs Scanlon and Lesser; Vice Chairs Dathan and Hartley; Ranking Member Pavalock-D'Amato and Kelly; and distinguished members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee:

*My name is Matt DeSimone.*

*Growing up in a middle-class suburban community during the early 2000's, surrounded by great friends and family's, opioid addiction was the last last thing I would have expected to take the lives of a couple of my great friends. At the young age of 21, my friend and 'brother from another mother', Kevin, tragically lost his life to this pandemic that is growing at a rate never before seen. Kevin was a great person. He had aspirations of being a state trooper, and was well on that trajectory until this cruel disease hit. He would not hesitate to give his shirt off his back for someone in need. When we were both 19 years old, he suffered a torn ACL playing sports. During his recovery, he was irresponsibly prescribed a large quantity of extremely strong opioids. Once his prescriptions finally expired and the physician refused any more, unfortunately in darkness and alone, somehow hiding his deep struggles from his friends and family, his addiction to the opioids became too strong and he seeked alternatives that somehow were easily available in our community. Less then a year later, his younger sister (18 years old) discovered him in the family's basement, cold to the touch with a needle hanging from his arm. He overdosed and died that day. I was away at college when i received that call from my mother with this news. A day and feeling I will never forget. In our close knit community, a piece of all of his friends and family died that day as well. Cruel and sad are the only words to describe this. Fast forward 7 years. My good friend Nick passed away at the age of 30 from the same terrible disease. Nick was a athlete and role model through and through. In high school, he placed 4th place in NYS in the sport of Wrestling. If you know the sport of wrestling, if you place in a state tournament in any North East state, you have a real gift. He was a role model to his younger brother, and a shoulder to lean on for his 2 older brothers. He was a great friend that would have your back, no matter what. After 2 years of in-patient and out-patient facilities that never proved helpful because insurance small print that ended coverage, on top of continuous relapse's because how easily it was to obtain these terrible drugs, he succumbed to this disease at age 30, with a full life ahead of him. Complete devastation.*

*The expansion of criminal laws, immediate removal of treatment barriers for those seeking help, and expanded treatment guidelines and requirements for service providers/insurance companies as outlined in Brian Cody's law, is a pivotal and vital movement in the opioid epidemic war in CT. I don't use the word war lightly, but hear this fact...according to the CDC, from 1999 to 2017, more than 702,000 people have died from a drug overdose. Of those deaths, 68% involved a prescription or illicit opioid (cdc.gov). I am asking you to support this law to save lives and spare families the grief of the loss of a love one.*

*I am urging you to consider these bills to ensure insurance companies are required to provide help to those seeking services and to utilize MAT as a standard form of treatment, the data suggests this is one of the most successful ways to help those recovering from addiction.*