

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 Melissa Silva.

Our story involves the pain of a young, scared child bounced among foster care due to her mother's heroin addiction.

This poor child was born addicted, suffered withdrawals at birth, born with hepatitis C, and behavioral and trauma disorders due to what she was put through throughout her young life.

Luckily, we as the family stayed involved, and inevitably in the end I am happy to say my aunt has officially adopted this sweet young lady, now 8 years old, and we all participate in raising her and giving her the happy fulfilled life she deserves

The mother is still living in the same town, but has made no efforts in years to see her.

She did attempt getting clean, however that consisted of receiving Methadone daily, for, at last I knew, was going on at least 2 years. I do not understand this program-when they take the methadone they are high....shouldn't these programs be weening them off?? This sweet young girl was returned to her mother numerous time through DCF because of the "treatment ", and because she was so high on the methadone she still was neglecting her, resulting in numerous emergency removals and foster home placements while we all continued to fight to finally in the end give her a permanent, loving, stable home....it would take me hours to really provide all of the details...the pain, the suffering our family and this child have endured.

We recently lost my sister in law to suicide. She hung herself. Her 24 year old daughter found her. She had been strung out on prescription drugs which led to heroine use. An addiction that started with physician prescribed money making substances with no regards to long term affects, and a careless mental health system that failed her many times.

My nephew lost his best friend to an overdose. He was only 17.

He went on to have a child with a woman who became addicted to heroine following a prescription pill addiction. She overdosed and barely made it. Her 4 month old child sat next to her unattended to for almost 24 hours. Luckily this child was spared what could have been yet another statistical tragedy.

My mother in law became addicted to her prescription medications that doctors kept continuously prescribing. It ultimately led to the health issues that took her life.

These are all the stories of one single family! And again, summaries of painful suffering with far too much detail to give-an average...Middle class...hard working family.

This isn't an "inner city" poverty issue.

This is an epidemic.

And this epidemic needs to fought harder. The pharmaceuticals that so easily start the addiction...the "slap on the hand" punishment to the dealers....the money making methadone clinics that feed the addiction long term...the insurance red tape that stalls or prohibits treatment...these problems need to be addressed and dealt with. These addicts aren't just statistics...they're people. And real families affected....good, decent, hardworking people who's lives are being destroyed by a rapidly growing problem that is continually being swept under the rug by lawmakers.

We're asking for change...begging for change...demanding change!

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.