

Public Health Committee  
March 2nd, 2021



*Testimony in Support of HB-5583*

**AN ACT CONCERNING EMERGENCY INTERVENTION BY A POLICE OFFICER WHEN A PERSON SUFFERS AN OVERDOSE.**

*To allow a police officer to take a person into custody when the officer has reasonable cause to believe that such person is experiencing a drug overdose.*

Co-Chairs Horn and Bradley; Vice Chairs Osten, Paolilo; Ranking Members Champagne and Green; and distinguished members of the Public Safety & Security Committee:

*My name is Aleksa Bembnista, I'm part of a growing coalition of your constituents and we thank you for allowing us to submit testimony in support of HB-5583*

*A friend suggested I share my story with you so that you can better understand what our community is going through as you deliberate these critical proposals - so here goes:*

*My name is Aleksa, and I am beyond grateful to have another chance at life. With the help of my family, who refused to let me die, I was able to find my way to long-term recovery on July 19th, 2015. The disease of addiction is fatal — 200 people die from it every day, and I was almost one of those statistics. Many people are too ashamed to ask for help, feel so much guilt about having the disease, so they hide and suffer in silence. That was me.*

*I am extremely passionate about recovery. I am an amazing girl, but addiction had me in its claws. I lost all hope and thought I would be one of those who would not recover. Today, I do anything and everything to help others and give them a glimmer of hope. Because if I did it, anyone can.*

*I became open about my recovery after attending Recovery Fest and finishing Ryan Hampton's book, American Fix. Both fueled me to do more. So, one week later, my best friend Dorota and I formed a non-profit organization called Glorious Recovery. Once we got involved, we realized how much work there is to be done and how much more there is to learn.*

*I simply ask you to strongly consider taking the following action:*

- *Review and support HB-5583, as well as a package of similar proposals that our foundation refers to as Brian Cody's Law.*
- *Understand that hundreds members affiliated with Brian Cody's Law are in support of this proposal, sponsored by State Representative Carol Hall, from the fifty-ninth assembly district.*
- *Consider as well that Brian Cody's Law calls supports any proposal that provides enhanced support systems to help those struggling with opioid addiction, stricter penalties for suppliers of lethal overdoses, better oversight of tracking opioids and waste, and ending safe havens – such as 'trap houses' where numerous overdoses occur on a frequent basis.*
- *Please also consider that Brian Cody's law opposes taking addicted people into 'custody', we should not continue the 'lock our way out of this' approach - but rather our organization suggests a 72 hour hold and urges the client be placement into a clinical setting with appropriate supports in place.*
- *Read up on the factors that are driving this effort forward on our website [BrianCodysLaw.org](http://BrianCodysLaw.org) and take action with us.*

*In this last decade, 500,000 Americans lost their lives to opioid use disorder. In 2020 alone, right here in your state, overdose deaths hit historic levels. Again! Thousands of citizens here in Connecticut have died since our organization's initial requests were filed. This simply cannot continue!*

*Do we have your support?*