

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 Matt DeSimone, 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:*

*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 sought alternatives that somehow were easily available in our community. Less than 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 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?*