

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 Sharon Dean, 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:

This epidemic has hit my family in too many ways. My 30 year old niece passed away from an opioid overdose, leaving three young daughters behind. As time went on I found out my own daughter had a problem. After becoming dependent on her depression medication she became addicted to heroin. She has overdosed and had to be narcaned in the past and I have been raising her two children. We need more help for this problem. It's hard to get into a program because there aren't enough beds available. Also due to insurance companies denying to pay for more then 30 days. How can any insurance company know how long someone needs medical treatment? They aren't in the medical field! We are losing too many people. On August 10, 2019 our life's came to a stop. My family loss my 20 year old grandson. Something has to change! He was looking for help! In May he was seeking help because he relapsed after being three years clean. when he finally found a place he had to go to New Jersey because there weren't any beds available in Connecticut. And he had a time limit to get there or the bed was going to someone else. After the long ride he was three minutes late and they weren't going to give him the bed. This has got to change! After he was there for 28 days, he called home upset telling his parents that he wasn't ready to leave. He asked for more time because he knew he still needed treatment. But the insurance company denied him the extension. Instead he had to do out patient care. He was going to meetings three times a week and working a good job. After being out of treatment for less then two months and going to his out patient meetings including on August 8, 2019 my grandson relapsed in the late hours of August 9 into August 10, 2019. He was seen at the hospital and released to the local police. The police did a suicide screening on him in the early hours of August 10th and he failed. The local police released him knowing he had an addiction problem in the past and he failed a suicide screening! Within hours my grandson was found dead in a trap house well known to our local police department. Something has to be done. The system failed my grandson n more then one way.

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 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?