

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 Emily Dionne, 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 child went through 6 years of this living hell. Her addiction started out with Percocet that she bought easily off the street. Eventually she needed 10 or more of these pills to not be sick per day. With a cost of \$50 per pill on the street she could not come up with \$500 a day to not be sick. As a result she started using Heroin that she also easily bought off the streets of Waterbury CT. Eventually she needed more and more of the Heroin as well. Her life spiraled into the toilet. She lost weight, lost her job, smashed up her car, stole from friends of ours to pawn things to get drugs. Eventually with no money my child had to have sex with these scumbag drug dealers in exchange for drugs. What a horrible act of desperation. When we finally found out what she was addicted to we sent her to treatment at High Watch in Kent at an out of pocket cost of \$9000 for 21 days. She used the same day she was released from treatment. Those scumbag drug dealers delivered Heroin to my mailbox that day. She actually thought these people cared about her. Her addiction got even worse. She was involved in a motor vehicle accident on Route 8 one afternoon. Her car rolled over and over until she was ejected out the passenger window of her car. She was unresponsive at first but survived. She was taken to Waterbury hospital and treated for her injuries which thankfully were not life threatening. There she was given Percocet for pain even though they knew she was addicted to Heroin. Back home to the nightmare. She went for outpatient treatment in Waterbury which became useless as well. One afternoon we found her on the floor in her room she Overdosed that day and thank God Narcan was able to save her. She was Narcaned at Charlotte Hungerford Hospital in Torrington. She was released within a couple of hours of us finding her overdosed on the floor. We were given a business card for the outpatient services and sent on our way. I couldn't believe it. She was nearly dead a couple of hours before. They released her I was furious !!!! That day again her scumbag dealer managed to bring her drugs to my home. The next day as I lay in her bed with her I spoke with her about her overdose. Asked her wasn't she afraid to die. She said yes Mom and then she said the most heartbreaking words I have ever heard. Mama I don't want to die but I don't want to live anymore. What an awful thing to hear. From there thank God I was able to find an inpatient women's home for her in Georgia. I had to pay every month out of pocket for her to stay. After 16 months of living there my girl got on with her life. Out of this state!!!! If she stayed here she would be dead by now. She just Celebrated her 4th year of recovery on January 20th. My girl survived. Sadly I know friends of hers that didn't. Friends she played with as a child. How heart wrenching. Something has to be done we're losing a generation of young people. Thank you for listening to my story. I support Cody's Law please do something please do the right thing.

Sincerely a lucky Mom

Emily Dionne

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?