

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 Cynthia Fusco, 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:

Steven, my son, is in recovery almost 2-1/2 years. I am so proud of the man he has become.

It wasn't easy getting here. It was a battle for my son. As his mom I would ride around looking for my son. I was living in chaos to save my son's life. I was sick and tired of the in/out of detox and rehabs that the overnight stays were not long enough for him to get healthy. It was always about the insurance company. 28-days is not enough for someone who had used for years and cried out for help. OD and released only to use again. Detox would not take him unless he had drugs in his system. So he'd have to medicate in order to get a bed at detox. A horrible roller coaster ride - death cycle that no parent, spouse or friend should have to watch. To many deaths related to those battling the opioid epidemic as they are not receiving treatment due to insurance denials and not having dirty urine to get a detox bed. The wait for a detox bed is undefinable. 110 beds in CT especially with an epidemic this is crazy.

After many misdemeanor arrests, he finally hit bottom 2-1/2 years ago when I refused to bail him out of jail. Let me tell you my sons arrests were not criminal - he did not steal or rob anyone. His arrests were related to drugs. I saved his life as well as the judge who sentenced him to WCCI. He participated in the 2nd Chance Program and was involved in many groups and received certificates. He completed his parole without any violations. He is now in probation without any violations.

My son is a college graduate. Since being home he has applied to many job opportunities, passed the initial background check/urine testing, only to find out 2 weeks into every job, the final background check shows a different person on paper than the person he is and his employment is suspended. No felonies only misdemeanors. Where is prison reform? Are there any re-entry programs? My son has humbled himself. I would love for him to share his story with you.

Personally, I know many people who have lost their lives to opioids. The statistics are going the wrong way.

I am behind the Brian Cody's Law because reform needs to happen today - not next year - NOW!

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?