



Connecticut Department of Public Health

**Testimony Presented Before the Committee on Public Safety and
Security Committee**

March 2, 2021

**Acting Commissioner Deidre S. Gifford, MD, MPH
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**House Bill 5583, An Act Concerning Emergency Intervention by a Police Officer when a Person
Suffers an Opioid Overdose**

The Department of Public Health (DPH) is opposed to House Bill 5583, which would allow a police officer to take a person into custody if they are suffering from an apparent drug overdose and the officer has administered an opioid antagonist or taken other lifesaving measures. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

The Department does not support allowing a police officer to take a person into custody who is suffering from an opioid overdose and in need of immediate care and treatment. Our concern focuses on the immediate medical care needed to reverse the overdose and the potential consequence when transporting a patient who has suffered an opioid overdose, unattended, in the back of a police vehicle. Transport in this manner makes providing medical care to the patient en route to the hospital more difficult.

The state of Connecticut has a statewide emergency medical services (EMS) system that is well-equipped to respond to opioid overdoses. EMS providers are trained in airway management, and are equipped with naloxone, oxygen and other lifesaving equipment that may be indicated based on patient status.

It is respiratory depression or arrest that will harm a patient in the midst of an opioid overdose. The treatment required for respiratory depression or arrest is to support the patient's airway, breathing for the patient, supplying oxygen if needed and administering naloxone to reverse the overdose, if indicated. If the patient was alone in the back of police vehicle, he or she could not be offered the aforementioned lifesaving care which could result in death. A patient who is "in need of immediate care and treatment" from opioid overdose would likely be better served by having a medical provider attend to them directly in a transport vehicle while on the way to a hospital.

Additionally, remanding people with Opioid Use Disorder or mental health issues, and forcing them to be placed in custody, could potentially have the undesired and potentially catastrophic

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effect of dissuading people from activating 9-1-1 emergency assistance for fear of being arrested/put into custody.

Thank you for your consideration of this information.

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