

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 Mariah Martirano, 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:

In 2017 I gave birth to a beautiful baby boy, Cameron Dylan. My first son, so special. This was a time in my life I will never forget just as most parents. However, this time of my life was not just very joyful and happy. I was sad, depressed, destroyed, and worried. My husband had gotten hurt a few months before and after the doctors took him off his pain pill, he turned to the streets. Well when the pills became too expensive and hard to find, heroin was there for him. 6 weeks after giving birth to my son I received the scariest phone call ever. They found my car on the side of the road and had to tow it. Where was my husband? I have no idea. His phone was off, he left for work that morning in my car but it was found on the side of a dirt road in the complete opposite direction of where he was suppose to be going. After 5 LONG hours i finally received a phone call back from New Milford hospital stating they had my husband. He was found face down in the snow, on a hiking trail (miles from where they found my car) frozen and unresponsive. He had over dosed on heroin. Thank god a man decided to take a walk on this cold snowy 2 degree day and heard him gasping for air in time to call 911. My husband was saved by narcan. (Thank god it worked and he was found in time yet this nightmare for my family was just beginning). My husband has two children from a relationship prior to me that we have full custody of, on top of my 6 week old son at the time. This left me alone at age 20 with 3 children while my husband fought for recovery. We were forced by DCF to keep him away from our children leaving me no choice but to spend hours during the day at the hospital trying to get him into detox and rehab. After 2 days they decided my husband was well enough to be discharged to go home. He couldn't come home though. Because my children were there and he couldn't be near them (per DCF orders).

We were left with no options. He had to go stay with my mother. The thought of him being a grown man living with his mother in law was only hurting him and making him feel depressed and more down. He then was left jobless and hopeless. The wait to get into a detox was a week. A rehab was even longer. This was the longest week of our lives. It was day 5 and he had been clean for these 5 days when we got a call a bed opened up. It was his time. I was finally going to be able to sleep, and get some sort of peace in our lives. Well, he had to use one last time because in order to get admitted he needed to have drugs in his system. He left by himself to go get his last batch, get high and go to detox.

Well he never made it there in time. 4 hours late, he was rejected. He showed up to our house a few hours later and was so upset, a mess, hopeless and worried. We finally decided on going to doctor to get some help and a temporary fix. Methadone.

Its now going on 3 years and my husband still isn't "sober" we are just getting by relying on methadone to help and save my husband. We have dreams he will become 100% completely sober one day and not rely on any "daily dose" to get him through the day.

We are thankful for narcan and the simple fact that my husband is still alive today because we know some people don't make it out alive.

We pray every day that we will figure out our next step without completely hitting rock bottom again or ever having to deal with the demon of opioids again. We will never be able to cover the proper treatment that my husband needs to deal with all of the coping mechanisms that he will need to over come this horrible addiction. Our insurance will only cover so much. So until we figure out our next step we are at a stand still just getting by going to a methadone clinic every morning just to hold him over.

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?