

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 Rachael Morrissey, 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:

I have been affected by this epidemic, I have a 25 year old sister in rehab and most recently lost my 20 year old brother. My brother failed a suicide screening at New Milford Police and was released without any contact to my family. Before that my brother had been in and out of rehab. The last rehab he was in when he was leaving, he called my parents crying because he knew he was not ready to leave. The rehab facility was making him leave because the insurance company would no longer help him pay for it. Although he had been addicted for years, it wasn't something he did everyday, it was a once in awhile thing, but one day he just hit rock bottom. He completed detox and outpatient programs but knew he wasn't ready to come home yet. He wanted to stay and get more help but was denied. My brother was trying so hard to become healthy again to enjoy the time with his family, his friends, his fiance, and daughter. After being released from the program he immediately found a job, he was working on becoming sober and staying sober. Then one day he relapsed, was arrested and failed a suicide screening that New Milford police gave him. That same day he died. When I got told he had passed, I couldn't believe it. My heart shattered into a million pieces right there. I wake up everyday hoping that it was just a nightmare. August 10th 2019 will always be one of the worst days of my life. I miss my brother dearly and I wish there was a way I could talk to him, laugh with him, just one more time, one last good memory. My brother was only 20 years old with a two year old daughter and a daughter on the way. He had a hard working job, he was trying so hard to be a great man. He was an amazing big brother. He was always there for me to talk to when I needed to. The only thing I have left is the memories of the car rides when he needed a ride or when our parents asked us to go to the store when we were on vacation. We have so many great laughs and memories, that our family and I miss so much. He asked for help and yet the insurance companies and police gave up on him. Just ask anyone that knew him, he was amazing and he was a great father. He is missed and loved dearly. He left a legacy!

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?