

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 Cathy Renzulli-Valente, 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 had finally found my soulmate, Kevin, and we were married in 1993. He became dad to my two beautiful daughters, and, in 1994 we welcomed our son into this world. I had no idea he was addicted to pain meds as he was very good at keeping it secret. Eventually I found out and begged him to go to rehab. Finally he gave in and agreed to go. The night before he was to go in, he used heroin (probably his first time according to the ME, due to amount found in his system) and passed away. He left behind his wife, 3 beautiful children and friends and family that were absolutely blown away by his death. How could such a young (32) vibrant, educated, hardworking man die from this? Opioids don't discriminate! They take precious lives every single minute of every single day and devastate families in the blink of an eye. It has been almost 20 years and I miss him every day, his children miss him everyday.

Please help so this horrible epidemic is stopped in its tracks! Those of us left behind implore you to take the steps necessary for this to happen.

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?