



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 Mary Romano, 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:

Nicholas was 28 years old, full of potential to lead a long and happy life before he was struck down by the disease of addiction and died of a drug overdose April 19, 2020. Once he became addicted, he was followed constantly by Drug Dealers whose only interest was about making money, money with blood and tears. They had no care of those they kill.

Our family endured cycles of detox, rehabilitations, half-way houses and a few months of sobriety before one of his drug dealers found him. He never was able to say no. We drained savings while battling the Insurance companies who denied days to keep him in Rehabilitation because we knew he wasn't ready to leave. It was emotionally, physically and financially draining and we lived in constant fear we couldn't keep him in the treatment programs which we prayed would help him. Battling the bureaucracy of insurance companies and healthcare organizations while trying to emotionally support and save our loved one was a constant struggle. In the end we lost the battle and Nicholas overdosed in an unregulated Half way house. The family is broken and devastated. We need your support to provide programs that don't financially deny treatment, regulated half way house and interim facilities to save lives so there are no more needless deaths and devastated families.

I want the lawmakers to know that Nicholas was so much more than his addiction. He was dearly loved by his family and had many friends. He was an altruistic person who wore his heart on his sleeve. Even when he was at his worst with his addiction, if he saw a homeless person suffering, he would buy them a McDonalds card and a bottle of water. Nick had many passions as he had a way with being a natural at anything he put his mind to when he was drug free. He was a self-taught guitar player and chef. Most of all Nick touched the lives of many people with his warm personality and infectious smile.

Supporting Brian Cody's law will help save the lives of those who still have a chance to recover and lead long and productive lives.

Please Help!!

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?