

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 Melissa Silva, 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:*

*Our story involves the pain of a young, scared child bounced among foster care due to her mother's heroin addiction.*

*This poor child was born addicted, suffered withdrawals at birth, born with hepatitis C, and behavioral and trauma disorders due to what she was put through throughout her young life.*

*Luckily, we as the family stayed involved, and inevitably in the end I am happy to say my aunt has officially adopted this sweet young lady, now 8 years old, and we all participate in raising her and giving her the happy fulfilled life she deserves*

*The mother is still living in the same town, but has made no efforts in years to see her.*

*She did attempt getting clean, however that consisted of receiving Methadone daily, for, at last I knew, was going on at least 2 years. I do not understand this program-when they take the methadone they are high....shouldn't these programs be weening them off?? This sweet young girl was returned to her mother numerous time through DCF because of the "treatment", and because she was so high on the methadone she still was neglecting her, resulting in numerous emergency removals and foster home placements while we all continued to fight to finally in the end give her a permanent, loving, stable home....it would take me hours to really provide all of the details...the pain, the suffering our family and this child have endured.*

*We recently lost my sister in law to suicide. She hung herself. Her 24 year old daughter found her. She had been strung out on prescription drugs which led to heroine use. An addiction that started with physician prescribed money making substances with no regards to long term affects, and a careless mental health system that failed her many times.*

*My nephew lost his best friend to an overdose. He was only 17.*

*He went on to have a child with a woman who became addicted to heroine following a prescription pill addiction. She overdosed and barely made it. Her 4 month old child sat next to her unattended to for almost 24 hours. Luckily this child was spared what could have been yet another statistical tragedy.*

*My mother in law became addicted to her prescription medications that doctors kept continuously prescribing. It ultimately led to the health issues that took her life.*

*These are all the stories of one single family! And again, summaries of painful suffering with far too much detail to give-an average...Middle class...hard working family.*

*This isn't an "inner city" poverty issue.*

*This is an epidemic.*

*And this epidemic needs to fought harder. The pharmaceuticals that so easily start the addiction...the "slap on the hand" punishment to the dealers....the money making methadone clinics that feed the addiction long term...the insurance red tape that stalls or prohibits treatment...these problems need to be addressed and dealt with. These addicts aren't just statistics...they're people. And real families affected....good, decent, hardworking people who's lives are being destroyed by a rapidly growing problem that is continually being swept under the rug by lawmakers.*

*We're asking for change...begging for change...demanding change!*

*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](http://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?*