



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 Ross Sommo, 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:*

*On the night on May 4th, I was hanging out with a good friend of mine. All of a sudden, my friend got a text message saying my best friend, my brother Henry J Scozzafava had died. I will never forget that moment. My whole body went numb. I did not cry at first from the sheer shock that I went into. A minute later, I was on the ground crying from the intense agony and pain I felt. I had felt like my whole life was turned upside down and immediately rushed over to Joy and Henry Scozzafava's house, my second family. My life will never be the same without my best friend, our friendship and brotherhood was the purest in every form, and an overdose of fentanyl shattered it. For YEARS, I tried to help him in every possible way. He tried multiple times to stop over the years, I was there through every withdrawal, him crying on my shoulder on how he wants to get better. I felt completely powerless. While he did attempt many rehab visits and detox visits, most places keep you for days and then release you on the street. These people HAVE A DISEASE, they should not be treated like second rate citizens. The State of CT failed me and all the laws that supposedly support these individuals. 2500 characters is not where near enough to even describe the agony I am still in and always will be in. The only comfort I even can scrape is knowing his soul is apart of my heart. I will never forget Henry J Scozzafava. As a resident of the State of CT, action MUST be taken to help these people.*

*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?*