

To whom it may concern:

In that I have a prior speaking engagement at the very same time that testimony is being taken up on/for Senate Bill 857 and House Bill 5405, I would like to provide written testimony in support of said bills.

I am the father of an opiate overdose fatality. Our son Eric died in 2011 at the age of 25. Our son's drug usage began later than many young people—He graduated from Okemos High school with honors, scored a 32 on his ATC and received scholarships for college. He attended Ferris State University and for his first 2 years of college did very well and was an honors student. He decided to change his major, move back to the Okemos area and attend school locally. To make a long story short, he met a young lady in East Lansing who was an addict and the rest was history.

In my prior life, I was the Pulmonary Services Director at Sparrow Hospital (now retired after 38 years) and we were naive enough to think that our son's addiction would simply be a negative blip in his life. I had many connections---but did not realize the extent of difficulty that one experiences with heroin addiction, and certainly did not know of the epidemic nature of this disease.

Our family struggled with Eric's addiction for over 2 years—and in that 2 years, he overdosed 3 times. (the 3rd was when he died)

Since our son's death, I have organized a local Families Against Narcotics Chapter and I have volunteered to provide support to many local families and addicts. (I have also received training as a recovery coach) In the over 2 years of dealing with our son's addiction—and in the nearly 3 years since his death, I have learned much about opiate addiction—including its chronic nature and propensity for relapse.

Most important for success is for all of us to do as much as we can to keep the addict safe and alive until the addicts themselves are finally “sick of being sick” and begin to reach out to the support systems that are available to them in the community. For many addicts, this not only can take months-- but years.

Allowing families the option to have narcan available to them will save lives and will provide the necessary hope to continue the fight and support needed for long term sobriety. I urge support of these bills and ask that you all in the legislature help and join us (ie= pass the bills) as we look to help our fellow citizens and their families.

Philip P Pavona