

The Ohio House of Representatives  
Criminal Justice Committee  
Chairman, Nathan Manning

Dear Mr. Chairman, Vice Chair Rezabek, Ranking Minority Member Celebrezze, and distinguished committee members,

I first want to thank all of you for the opportunity to submit my written testimony and tell my family story at this hearing on Senate Bill No. 1.

I would like to begin by telling you a little bit about myself, my name is Travis Wilson Bornstein. After high school I voluntarily enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. I spent four years on active duty and two years in the inactive reserves. I was meritoriously promoted to sergeant (E-5) at age 21.

For the last 28 years I've been a Teamster member of Local No. 24 in Akron Ohio. 21 of those years I've been a full-time officer and the last 18 years I've served as the President and Principal Officer of Local No.24.

I'm 50 years old and I've been married to my wife Shelly for the last 27 years she works at Aultman Hospital in Canton, Ohio as a Nuclear Medicine Technologist. She's been there for 28 years. We have 3 children, our youngest daughter Taylor is 19 years old and a graduate from Lake High School in 2015 with her license in cosmetology and she has a full-time job and her own apartment.

Our oldest daughter Tana is 23 years old and a graduate from Lake High School in 2012. She is a recent graduate of Walsh University with a degree in Exercise Science.

That leads me to my only son Tyler Wilson Bornstein. Tyler was a 2009 Magna Cum Laude graduate of Lake High School. He participated on the back to back Federal League Championship golf teams earning all-league and all county honors his freshman, sophomore, and junior years. His senior year he decided not to play golf and instead participate on the Lake Bluestreak Football Team. At the end of the season Tyler earned the Senior Ironman Award.

After high school, Tyler attended Walsh University to study accounting and finance. After not playing competitive golf for over two years, he decided to walk on the golf team earning a golf and academic scholarship. See Tyler was smart, athletic, a hard worker, he was gentle and kind and had lots of friends. He also had a physique like a Greek God. In April of 2013 he entered the Natural Junior Mr. Ohio Bodybuilding Show, taking second place in his very first competition. Of course, I get to say all these nice things about my boy because I'm his dad, but it's also true. So how does a kid like Tyler who comes from a middle-class family, with loving parents and tons of family and friends who loved him get addicted to heroin?

Well let me try and give this committee an explanation...See Tyler broke his right arm four times and had two surgeries on his right elbow, the first at age 11 and the second surgery at age

18 and in the process, he became addicted to the opiate pain medication which ultimately led him to heroin.

Over the next several years Tyler was in and out of rehab facilities in Ohio and Michigan. In November 2013 he took a leave of absence from college, went into a 21 day rehab facility and went into a six month treatment program at a sober living facility in Florida. He came back home to Ohio in June of 2014. He enrolled back at Walsh University and talked to the golf coach about getting back on the golf team. But in mid- September of 2014 Tyler relapsed again. However, this time he had reached his twotime limit for rehab and he no longer had health insurance. He was seeking treatment in a state-funded rehab facility but was put on a three-week waiting list before he could get help. Tyler could no longer deal with the pain from opiate withdrawal and therefore decided to use heroin one more time.

On September 28th 2014, Tyler met up with another heroin addict and they purchased a lethal dose of heroin laced with fentanyl. While he was in the process of overdosing instead of the other individual calling 9-1-1 for help, he took my son to a vacant lot on the corner of Arlington and Alfred in Akron, Ohio and left him there to die. Later that day the Summit County Sheriff's Department showed up at my house. I was not home but he proceeded to tell my wife and 17-year-old daughter that a resident found a dead body in a vacant lot and it was our 23-year-old son.

How does a family recover from such a tragedy?

If I may, let me leave you with a couple thoughts....the first thought is FORGIVENESS... I've learned that I have to forgive a whole lot of people for me to recover and move forward. Guys like the drug dealer, the person who dumped my son's body in a field like a piece of trash. The Doctor who prescribed opiates to a kid. But most all ...MYSELF... I was embarrassed and ashamed to talk to anyone about my son's addiction because I thought I failed as a Father and my son was a Moral Failure. I was embarrassed of my son.

My second thought is EDUCATION.... See, my wife and I and our family attended the National Rally for a Federal Response to the Opiate Epidemic in Washington, D.C. What I learned there was, that the over prescribing of opiate pain medicine has harmed millions of pain patients and led to a sharp increase in addiction, heroin use and overdose deaths. I also learned that the United States Government acknowledged that this is the worst drug epidemic in US history. I was stunned when I heard the top Doctor of the United States.... The United States Surgeon General say "that addiction IS NOT Moral Failure that it's a disease just like cancer, heart disease, and diabetes and should be treated like a disease". Wow a Disease not Moral Failure. I am learning to forgive myself and I'm no longer embarrassed of my son.... he is now my hero to accomplish so much with such a gut-wrenching disease. I'm only embarrassed that I was a fool.

Unfortunately, it's too late to save my son however there are many lives that can be saved by passing stricter laws in the state of Ohio on dealers who are dealing fentanyl.

Mr. Chairman I'd like to give you some statistics on fentanyl deaths in the State Ohio. In 2012 there were 75 deaths, in 2013 there were 84, in 2014 there were 503 and in 2015 there were 1155.

I would like to thank the Committee for allowing me to submit my written testimony today and would respectfully request that this Committee take immediate action and support Senate Bill 1.

Respectfully Submitted,

Travis W. Bornstein  
President  
Teamsters Local No. 24