

Proponent Testimony of Robin Barton
House Bill 141
October 17, 2017

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Rezabek, Ranking Member Celebrezze, and members of the committee. Thank you for allowing me testify in support of House Bill 141.

I am here today to speak to you not on statistics on this opioid/heroin epidemic nor cite research. I am here to share a couple things I have learned the past 15 years about addiction. My daughter is a recovering addict. Her journey through the hells of addiction was 10 years long. Thanks be to God she is now almost 5 years clean. It is due to her, our, journey that I have made it a personal mission to share what I have learned. Not just what was learned personally, but what I have witnessed/heard from many others along the way. I am here to share why there should be no doubt, no question as to the necessity of HB141, not only as it being a necessary part in turning this epidemic around but moreso, that parents and loved ones of addicts who are dying will know their loved ones life did matter. That there was value there. That just like anyone else who would play a part in taking their loved ones life would be investigated and charged and sentenced, the drug dealer needs to be held accountable. Heroin dealers KNOW heroin kills. We all know heroin kills. Why would we question whether someone involved in the selling of it should be held accountable for death related to providing it?

Does a dealer know a customer will die from that particular deal? Maybe not. The question is did he know he could. The answer is yes. We all know heroin kills.

I see the drug deal like the dealer handing the addict a gun. Cocked and loaded. He knows without a doubt that the addict will pull the trigger. Does he know that bullet will be fatal? Maybe not. Does he know it could be? Yes. Yes he does. We all do. Heroin kills. We all know heroin laced with fentanyl is deadly. This is a drug that even a speck of it can lead to overdose. Innocent people, first responders and their K9's, children are dying due to this drug. How can we not hold accountable those bringing this poison to our homes and our streets that is not just killing addicts, but those surrounding them as well? There is not a dealer alive that doesn't know fentanyl laced heroin kills.

Something else that the dealer knows that you may not know is that the addict who has been working on recovery and has minimal clean time is a very vulnerable soul. Dealers will text or call an addict they haven't seen or have heard is in recovery making them aware they still are in business. The dealer knows the addict is sick and weak and they prey on that sickness and that weakness. They also know that their customer who is in early recovery and relapses is the most likely to die of overdose. Many, many, many addicts have died the first time using after having been clean because they use the amount they had graduated to before they tried to stay clean. It is too much. Many, many addicts are not getting the treatment they need. Many, many are not getting treatment at all. Trying to stay clean on their own takes a strength and a power much greater than the craving that goes through them body, soul and mind every minute. They are sick. And the dealer knows this. They not only take advantage of someone who is sick, they know

what they sell is killing them. The dealer has more knowledge of how addiction works than most. And he uses that knowledge to stay in business.

Addicts are overdosing everywhere. Public places, churches, roadways, with their children. They are killing themselves and innocent people are dying. There should be no question at all in anyone's mind that the person found responsible for providing an illegal drug they know is killing massive numbers of people should be held accountable.

It is my understanding that at present a prosecutor must prove overdose unforeseeable. That all the defense has to do is show the addict did not die in the past from using for the dealer to avoid conviction of involuntary manslaughter. I hope and pray that today what I have shared with you might make you see that maybe the overdose was not in your face foreseeable, but the facts that the dealer knows he is selling an illegal drug that is in fact deadly needs to be the focus.

We will see recovery in our homes and communities and state when we can successfully bust down the wall of stigma by better educating on the facts related to addiction. When we work better on teaching prevention. When treatment is available for all those seeking it. And when we hold those accountable for the deaths of thousands of precious loved ones. Many who died wanting nothing more than to live free of addiction.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.