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Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Rezabeck, Ranking Member Celebrezze, thank you for allowing me to speak in support of HB 296. My name is Belinda Brooks. I represent the Wood County Prosecutors Office Addiction Response Collaborative, or ARC. I am here today to support HB 296 sponsored by Representative Theresa Gavorone. As you know, a lot of money and resources have gone into the fight against the opiate epidemic. When someone is ready to seek treatment we must make sure they have the tools necessary for a successful recovery. This bill will help to ensure they are safe from drug dealers that are targeting them as they come and go from a treatment facility. Unfortunately, they are easy prey for drug dealers when they are at a vulnerable time in their life. I personally witnessed this happen on February 4, 2016 when I went to the Zepf Center in Toledo Ohio for a meeting at 1:00 pm. I accidentally missed the driveway and turned into the next driveway by the facility which was an empty parking lot with a small run down building. As soon as I got to the end of the parking lot and turned my vehicle around there was a man at my driver's side window and had his hand out with something in it. I am certain it was drugs. I immediately left the parking lot and went to my meeting right next door. You can actually see these people outside the facilities at any given time.

I also have a personal experience with my daughter who is a recovered addict. She tried to use Noami's House in Toledo, Oh. It is recovery housing for women. We got her checked in and she made it 6 hours before she walked out and went three doors down to a drug dealer's house. She left all of her belongings there and just left at 9:00 at night. I had to pick all of her things up the next day in a garbage bag on the front porch. It is dis-hearting as a parent to watch this happen so fast when you think your child is going to be safe. Lastly, my daughter was sentenced to a 12 month stay after 6 months in jail. She was sent to The Butterfly House in Toledo, Oh. Again, this half way house was for women and could hold 3 women at a time. It was located in the south end of town and the neighborhood had many homes that were run down with boards in the windows. She did stay the whole time even though there were many issues there. One being there was a drug dealer in the house right across the street. Luckily, this time she was much stronger in her recovery and she called the police and reported them. I am sure other women were not as strong as she was and left the house. They are all vulnerable and weak different times in their recovery.

I believe increasing the penalties for anyone trafficking drugs within 1000 feet of a treatment facility will only help in the recovery process along with getting more drug dealers off the streets. The drug dealers do not need to sit right next door to their potential clients who can't say no.

Again, thank you for letting me speak today about House Bill 296. I would be happy to answer any questions.