

Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services
Testimony of:
Michael Cohen
Member of the Summit Count Opiate Task Force – Family Education Committee
Parent of a daughter that suffers from the disease of heroin/opiate addiction
March 14, 2017

Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Health and Human Services Subcommittee, good *afternoon/morning*.

My name is Michael Cohen and I am the parent of a daughter that suffers from the disease of opiate/heroin addiction. For the past two and a half years I have been active on our counties opiate task force and an active participant in the NarAnon Family Groups. Like Alanon we are a global fellowship for individuals who have someone in their lives that suffers from a "narcotics" addiction. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today.

Just a week before my daughter entered graduate school, in social work, she broke her foot and was prescribed a large amount of opiate pain relievers with too many refills. After the refills she went to heroin. She still completed her first year with a 3.84 GPA. By year two her addiction forced her to drop out of graduate school. The journey began. While Summit County is far more equipped than most, there were waiting times for services. Heroin addiction does not wait. In 2015 someone died every 2 hours and 52 minutes in Ohio from an overdose. My daughter almost died three times. One occasion it took six does of Narcan to revive her. She has since utilized all of the detox, rehabilitation, correctional, mental health, counseling, and medical assisted treatments available in our county. Today she celebrates one year and 18 days of sobriety.

Not all counties are as fortunate. I sit in NarAnon meetings with parents from Medina, Wayne, and Portage counties. Their services are "third world" for an epidemic that takes so many lives. We, as a society, have an obligation to all of our residents no matter where they live. I am tired of going to funerals

In the end my daughter Leah is alive today because of the Affordable Care Act. She has access to Medicaid under the Medicaid expansion and is therefore able to receive the Vivitrol shot which blocks opiate receptors in the brain. This shot save Leah's life. Of the recipients in Ohio 92% get this shot through Medicaid. Stop Medicaid expansion and the death toll will skyrocket. My daughter has access to mental health counseling and gets her medication because of Medicaid expansion and the ACA. She and most others would not be able to afford these lifesaving services without the Medicaid expansion.

Finally, the Ohio Addiction Treatment Program (ATP) should finally be opened to the entire state and properly funded. A resident's location should not determine services. This program has been tested since 2013 and it is the best medical protocol to date. This program is a proven success. (Section 327.120 house Bill 59 signed by Governor John Kasich in July of 2013). We as a society, have an obligation to all of our residents for a standardized level of service no matter where they live in our state. If we expect to reach our goals and stop leading the nation in heroin/opiate deaths, we must fund detox and rehabilitation center centers and other required services.

Respectfully,
Michael N. Cohen

