

Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services
Testimony of: Carol Fambro Henderson
Trumbull County resident
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Good morning. My name is Carol Fambro Henderson. I was born and raised in both Warren and Detroit by my paternal grandparents. My father was an alcoholic and lived in Detroit. I did not meet my mother until I was 12 years old. My grandparents were good to me and I was raised as an only child.

I would spend my summer vacations with my father. That's where I started using a liquid drug - alcohol. When I was 12 years old, my cousins and I would clean up her house after the adults had parties and we used to drink whatever was left in the beer or liquor bottles. I didn't like the taste, but it would calm me down and help me with my stuttering, much to my surprise. I only drank when I was in Detroit because my grandparents didn't drink.

I got pregnant at 16, married at 16 (shotgun wedding), dropped out of school in the 11th grade, had two more children and divorced. Things didn't work because we were both too young. I packed up and moved to Detroit at the age of 21.

Disappointed in myself and lonely, I started using liquid drugs, but they made me ill. I met someone who introduced me to narcotics and soon I was addicted. My grandmother came to visit me and saw the shape that my life was in and she strongly suggested that I return to Warren with my children; which I did. I was about 26 or 27, snorting heroin, dealing drugs. I used for about nine years after returning to Warren and I was sick of myself. I never lost custody of my children and I worked every day. I had a home and cared for my children, but I had lost the essence of who I was.

I met a lady who lived next door to me and we would talk daily. After about a year of talking with the next door neighbor, I became a born again Christian. I remember that day vividly, July 9, 1978. Since that day, I have not used any form of drugs or smoked. If you ask me why I never relapsed to usage, it's because I never found a good enough reason to use again, no matter what life has brought me over the past 38 years. I was able to complete my high school education and furthered my education with a Bachelors in Social Work and a Masters in Counseling. I am also a Licensed Social Worker. I still attend church; I still attend 12 step NA meetings. I have a sponsor and I sponsor women.

In 1996, crack cocaine was destroying people's lives, families and children. Crack cocaine was a blight to our communities. I talked to a lady at my church about renting a vacant home she owned. I reached out to the Oxford House Foundation. That year, the Kenilworth Oxford Recovery House was opened. We were the first ¾ Way house in Trumbull County. The first four women that stayed in the Kenilworth House are still clean over 20 years later. I am in touch with two of them and those two women are in touch with the other two women. Many of the women that stayed at the Kenilworth House are still

clean to this day. The house was very successful in assisting in the recovery and restoration of many women.

In January of this year, after much pleading by people I know because of the lack of housing for women, I opened another women's recovery house.

I have been in the chemical dependency field for over 30 years. In March of 2016, I had a 26 year old cousin die from a drug overdose and just this month, I had a client die from a drug overdose at the age of 21.

I don't know about other counselors, but I am sure they feel the same way I do; when someone dies on my watch, I start to second guess myself. I wonder: am I talking enough, listening enough, encouraging enough, etc. That young man was not the first death I experienced while working in this field, however, it takes away a piece of you every time it happens.