

My name is David Kern, I am thankful for the opportunity to share my support regarding HR.299. The topic of addictions namely the Heroin epidemic, is something that is very close to my heart. I hope to offer a little insight into this deadly disease that is ravaging our communities.

One of the many focuses of my work is in the addictions field through Christ Centered therapy as a pastor, and counselor. These services are offered through Vitality Church Outreach. I serve in this field with a degree in psychology, and a published author of a book titled, "The Raw Truth: Addicted and Redeemed."

I want to share a true case story of a couple who enjoyed a long and wealthy marriage raising children enjoying the life of wealth, blessings, lucrative careers, and active in their local church. The time came when their children grew and went off to college. During their empty nest days, the husband suffered an injury that required surgery, as procedure he was prescribed pain killers.

As time wore on the pain killers kept coming, soon his wife would suffer a minor injury and self-prescribe her husband's prescription. Before they knew it they both were addicted opiates. The prescriptions ceased, and they could only find their fix on the black-market. When that became costly, their addictions metastasized to cocaine use.

As the few years wore on they lost everything. Their brother came to me and for a year we prayed for this couple. The time came six-years ago, when they realized they were defeated, and sought help, but only wanted faith-based care. They received services through Vitality Church Outreach.

After two-years of the Christ centered therapy, they currently serve as life coaches and support group leaders for Vitality Church outreach the last four-years.

The husband was blessed with a great job as was the wife. Today they are great assets to the mission of Vitality Church Outreach.

Statistics show that approximately 1 out of 5 families have a loved one who suffers with addiction. For every 10 people 2 are directly connected to someone family or friend who suffers with heroin addiction.

What is the answer? There isn't one that I can provide, or any other human being on this earth can provide. Addiction is larger than humanity thus, can only be defeated by the One who is larger than our struggles, Jesus Christ

This is not a new concept or an attempt to reinvent the wheel. It has been spoken, and is still the answer today in AA, or any 12 Step programs. God is the answer! Our great American History and moments of adversity such like these, has God's loving, merciful hand all over our victories.

Addiction becomes a god for individuals. The substance satisfies their immediate need for euphoria, and the escape from guilt, shame, and responsibility. However, it is only a temporary fix. When its availability evades the individual, he or she is left chasing it wherever they can find it, willing to sacrifice anyone or anything to receive its temporary promise.

Moreover, the promise they seek is hope and hope is only identified when their pursuit of euphoria is rerouted to the pursuit of the God.

My testimony is my proof. Why? The one that writes this to you today was written off as hopeless, but God had different plans. That is to be a visual and vocal image for those addicted, have loved ones, or know someone struggling with addiction. Jesus Christ is larger than addiction, and I pray that HR 299 receives the credibility it deserves and passes. Empowering the Christian faith community to touch lives, restore hope, and serve its God given purpose. As our Lord speaks to us in Matthew 25:34-40 34

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’37 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’40 “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to share with all of you and if anyone would like to find out more about faith based addictions services please give me a call (440) 867-6265. Praying for the passage of HR 299.