

From: Amber Strnad

To: Madam Chair Anielski

Members of the House State and Local Government Committee:

Date: February 14, 2018

RE: HR 299 – The Faith-Based Addiction Recovery Resolution

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My name is Amber Strnad, Director of Northeast Ohio's Fight Against Addiction. Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony about faith-based treatment.

Northeast Ohio's Fight Against Addiction is a community awareness and outreach group seeking to positively impact our community and offer hope to those affected by addiction. I began the group in 2016 in hopes of bringing our community together to have a conversation about the heroin epidemic and learn from each other. On November 10, 2016 we had our first community meeting at United Way of Lake County in Mentor, OH. We had a few representatives from local resources speak and then we opened the floor in order to hear the voices of our community. We had a grieving mother cry to a room of 100+ people because her son hung himself in Lake County Jail because after years of struggling he couldn't fight any longer, we heard from a guy that was desperate to find treatment for a friend and we had 14 individuals in long term recovery stand up and share their journey. These 14 individuals had all been to treatment facilities and detox numerous times. Many of them shared stories of how they had overdosed and been brought back to life using Narcan on more than 5 occasions, some of them 20. Out of the 14 individuals that shared their story, 13 of them said that the only reason they are here today and in long term recovery is because they finally found God.

Over the past almost two years, the organization has grown tremendously. We get calls daily from people looking for help and most of those phone calls are from people that have been to numerous treatment facilities already. Unfortunately, we don't even have the option to refer people to faith-based facilities in our area because, due to lack of funding, they do not exist.

We continuously see treatment centers expanding and opening but the death toll continues to rise. We have two families in our area that have buried two of their children in the last few years. We are losing an entire generation and we need to take another approach. I work with, go to church with and volunteer with people in recovery on a daily basis and God has truly been the common denominator in the success of those maintaining sobriety. Faith-based recovery works and our prayer is that in the near future, with your help, we are able to add faith-based recovery to our local resource list.

God Bless,

Amber Strnad