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State Representative
56th House District

State and Local Government Committee

House Bill 664 Testimony
Representative Dan Ramos
June 13th, 2018

Chairman Anielski, Vice Chairman Hambley, Ranking Member Holmes, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 664, legislation to affirm home rule for communities.

Although we have done much to fight the scourge of opioid addiction in our state, we all know that the fires of addiction still burn hot in each and every county of our State. Last year, the rate of opioid deaths rose at three times the national average and the 5,232 total deaths rated us third behind only Pennsylvania (pop 12.8 Million) and Florida (pop 20.6 Million), respectively.

Fighting this epidemic will have to be multifaceted with cooperation of all levels of government, non-profits, the medical community, faith-based communities and others. The importation and distribution of these dangerous substances needs to be stopped, addicts need to be able to seek timely treatment for their addiction, doctors need to make certain prescribing habits don't cause further addiction, and those overdosing need access to life-saving treatment.

That treatment is Naloxone.

It has been a literal life saver. Naloxone, sometimes known by its brand name Narcan, is a drug that, when administered via nasal spray during an opioid overdose, counteracts the depression of the central nervous and respiratory systems, thereby allowing the victim to breathe. Prior to its introduction, an overdose was much more likely to cause death. This is why through all of our communities first responders have begun to carry naloxone doses with them, saving lives on site.

However, some local subdivisions have suggested the outlandish policy of limiting the dissemination of this life-saving cure, effectively allowing their own citizens to die when they have the means and ability to save them.

Quite simply this will cause needless deaths. It is unacceptable. This was the impetus of House Bill 664, which would eliminate any and all state payments to a subdivision that refuses or creates a policy to limit the distribution of naloxone. The bill is written to specifically state that this does not affect any payments to any individuals.

Although there are many ways to go about lowering and hopefully eliminating this problem in our state, one that does not work and has never worked is victim blaming. There's nothing more cruel and ignorant than a policy that thinks someone will "learn" from their mistakes by dying.

It is important to remember that for many addicted to heroin they never chose to get high in the first place. A large amount of opioid addicts became addicted through legal means, following doctor's orders, and got hooked.

I refuse to believe we are the type of State that responds to a dying person with *let them die*. I want these deaths to end.

Thank you for your consideration, Representative Howse and I welcome any questions on this bill.