

Committees

Transportation, Commerce & Workforce, Ranking
Health, Human Services & Medicaid, Ranking
Finance
Finance Subcommittee on Health & Medicaid
Ways & Means
Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee

23rd District

Antonio@ohiosenate.gov
(614) 466-5123
(614) 719-3913 (fax)



State Senator Nickie J. Antonio District 23

House Health Committee
November 12, 2019
Sponsor Testimony SB 59

Good morning, Chair Lipps, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member West and members of the House Health Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 59, The Naloxone without Prescription Training Bill.

In Ohio, a state hit hard by the heroin and fentanyl overdose epidemic, it is critical to be able to easily acquire the overdose-reversal drug, naloxone, at most pharmacies without a prescription. In fact, a 2015 Ohio law allows pharmacists across the state to use a standing order signed by a doctor to dispense this lifesaving medication, most commonly known by the brand name of the nasal spray version, Narcan, to customers who do not have their own prescription.¹ About 77 percent of the Ohio's pharmacies in 87 of the state's 88 counties now have standing orders in place and have registered with the State of Ohio Board of Pharmacy to provide naloxone without a prescription.²

In order to help combat Ohio's opioid crisis, Senate Bill 59 would require all pharmacists, technicians and pharmacy interns be trained to become knowledgeable that naloxone can be dispensed without a prescription and would also require those professionals that dispense the drug to maintain an adequate supply of it.

¹ <http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/4729.44>

² https://www.cleveland.com/healthfit/index.ssf/2018/04/life-saving_overdose_antidote.html

However, when author Brie Zeltner with the Cleveland Plain Dealer, surveyed 275 Northeast Ohio pharmacies in April of 2018, a large number of pharmacies reported a lack of awareness that naloxone can now be dispensed without a prescription.³ In fact, 20 percent of the pharmacies surveyed incorrectly stated that customers would need a prescription for naloxone. Consequently, many pharmacies did not even have naloxone in stock. Anecdotal evidence corroborates this report as we heard from folks in different communities that were denied their request for Naloxone when they did not have a prescription. Indeed we heard testimony from a woman who called her local pharmacy and was told she would need a prescription.

We know we must do everything possible to remove barriers that could prevent Ohioans from accessing this life-saving medication. Our deadly opioid epidemic has claimed the lives of over 4,500 Ohioans annually, making Ohio among the top five states in the country with the highest opioid-related death rate.⁴ Even more concerning, is that Ohio, along with West Virginia and New Hampshire, have some of the highest synthetic opioid-related death rates in the country.⁵

SB 59 passed both the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee and the Senate floor unanimously. Twenty-four senators have also signed on as cosponsors of the bill. This bill has also received support from the Ohio Pharmacists Association, MetroHealth, the Ohio Fire Chiefs Association, Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities, Faith in Public Action and more organizations that understand the importance of SB 59.

Passing SB 59 will go a long way to assisting friends, family and loved ones to be able to access this life saving medication, prevent fatal overdoses, save lives and as a result, create the opportunity for treatment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have at this time.

³ https://www.cleveland.com/healthfit/index.ssf/2018/04/life-saving_overdose_antidote.html

⁴ <https://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/opioids/opioid-summaries-by-state/ohio-opioid-summary>

⁵ https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm675152e1.htm?s_cid=mm675152e1_w