

CUYAHOGA COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

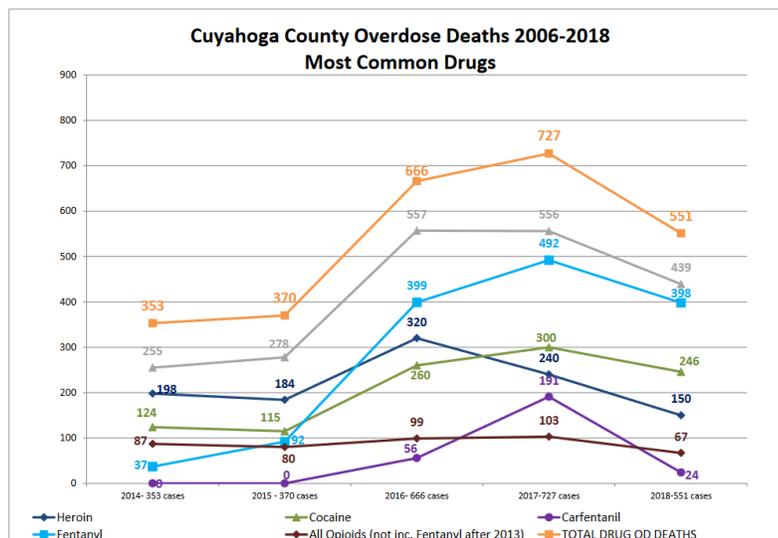
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Terry Allan, MPH
Health Commissioner, Cuyahoga County Board of Health
Proponent Testimony
Senate Bill 59
Ohio House of Representatives
Health Committee
The Honorable P. Scott Lipps, Chairmen
June 2, 2020

Chairmen Lipps, Ranking Member Boyd, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on Senate Bill (SB) 59. My name is Terry Allan and I am the Health Commissioner for the Cuyahoga County Board of Health, the public health authority serving 883,000 Ohioans in 58 Greater Cleveland communities. The ravages of the opioid epidemic have touched every corner of the state and Cuyahoga County has suffered innumerable repercussions from this scourge.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that 70,237 Americans died from drug overdoses in 2017, of which 47,600 were opioid related. Also in 2017, 11.1 million people reported misuse of prescription opioid pain medications, nearly 900,000 people used heroin, and 2.1 million people suffered from an opioid use disorder.

To date, Cuyahoga County has experienced 551 fatal drug overdoses, with heroin, fentanyl and carfentanyl among the major contributors (85%) in these tragic fatalities.



Source: Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office revised 3-25-19



5550 Venture Drive ♦ Parma, Ohio 44130
Direct: 216-201-2000 ♦ Fax: 216-676-1311 ♦ TTY: 216-676-1313 ♦ www.ccbh.net
Terrence M. Allan, R.S., M.P.H. Health Commissioner

Because of this ongoing crisis and the unacceptable death toll from opioids (prescription opioids, heroin, and illicit synthetic opioids like fentanyl), we must continue an “all hands on deck” approach to prevent opioid misuse and treat those with opioid use disorder, to decrease the deadly effects of addiction until sustained recovery is achieved. One such intervention that can reduce overdose deaths is naloxone, a drug antagonist that reverses the effects of opioids and can be life-saving when an opioid overdose occurs. Naloxone is highly effective and has saved lives from opioid overdoses, but can only do so if it is in the right hands, at the right time. Healthcare providers have a critical role in assuring this occurs across all populations at risk.

As we continue to battle this epidemic in Ohio it is critical that we increase access to naloxone for those individuals and families dealing with this deadly disease. Increased access to naloxone will reduce the number of fatal opioid deaths offering those suffering from an opioid use disorder an opportunity to enter treatment.

Many people are still unaware that you can obtain Naloxone without a prescription, through education of pharmacy staff and the general public we can continue to help increase access to this life saving drug.

As the State of Ohio reopens cautiously to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, we have seen an unfortunate increase in overdose deaths across the state and in Cuyahoga County. Public health continues to work on several fronts increasing awareness to Harm Reduction programs continues to be an essential service in reducing the impact of opioid abuse. Project DAWN (Deaths Avoided with Naloxone) continues to save lives across in Cuyahoga County (<http://opiatecollaborative.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/Project-DAWN.aspx>) and across Ohio. Offering additional opportunities to enhance this life saving program by increasing access to naloxone through pharmacy education will assist in reducing opioid overdose deaths. For this reason, we urge your support for House Bill 59.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

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