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23rd District

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



State Senator Nickie J. Antonio District 23

Senate Health, Human Services & Medicaid Committee
March 20, 2019
Sponsor Testimony SB 59

Good morning, Chair Burke, Vice Chair Huffman and members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 59, The Naloxone without Prescription Training Bill.

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

In Ohio, a state hit hard by the heroin and fentanyl overdose epidemic, it should be easy to get 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

¹ <http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/4729.44>

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

However, according to a survey completed by the Cleveland Plain Dealer of 275 Northeast Ohio pharmacies, a large number of pharmacies do not know that naloxone can 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.

Misinformation from pharmacies regarding naloxone prevents Ohioans from accessing life-saving medication, costing more lives in the already-deadly opioid epidemic that 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, Ohio, along with West Virginia and New Hampshire, have the highest synthetic opioid-related death rates in the country.⁵

Both the Ohio Pharmacists Association and the Ohio Board of Pharmacy are neutral on this bill at this time.

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