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SB 351 Sponsor Testimony  
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Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee. Thank you for allowing me to give testimony on Senate Bill 351.

The purpose of this bill is to designate August 31st Ohio Overdose Awareness Day and remember the lives lost to the opioid epidemic. To physically represent the impact that drug overdoses have on families and loved ones throughout the state, all state flags displayed at public institutions will be flown at half-staff.

A constituent from Berea, Ohio impacted by the opioid epidemic recently brought this idea to me to mirror the International Overdose Awareness Day, also on August 31st. While I recognize we are navigating a new public health crisis with COVID-19, the lasting impact and complicated issues associated with opioids are still heavily present in both our state and country.

Yesterday, August 31<sup>st</sup> was International Overdose Awareness Day and I wanted to share how this day was observed:<sup>1</sup>

- 2 worldwide virtual events took place that allowed survivors and family members to share their stories and remember those they have lost
- Ohio had 12 statewide events hosted by various organizations and citizens in the following counties:
  - Scioto, Clark, Lorain, Franklin (3), Ottawa, Lucas, Knox, Seneca, Richland and Erie
  - These events ranged from Narcan training, awareness walks, candlelight vigils or virtual meetings
- According to the official International Overdose Awareness Day website, 470 events took place worldwide on August 31<sup>st</sup>, 245 of those events took place across the United States

During the past couple of years, Ohio has shown a decline in the total number of overdose-related deaths per year, however, it remains the leading cause of injury-related deaths since 2007. In 2018, over 3,000 Ohioans died of unintentional drug overdoses, which is the lowest number of deaths per year since 2015. Although mortality rates have decreased, the percentage of fentanyl involved overdoses increased by 2%, with fentanyl involved deaths making up 73% of all overdose deaths in 2018, adding to the complexity of this issue.<sup>2</sup>

While our state is improving, Ohio ranks 5th highest in the country in overdose deaths with 35.9 per 100,000.<sup>3</sup>

As a General Assembly, we have made significant investments to support Ohioans struggling with substance use and mental health disorders by expanding recovery housing, investing in wrap-around services for K-12 students and increasing county crisis stabilization services. Ohio Overdose Awareness Day is just one more small step toward eradicating this crisis from our state.

Thank you, Chairman Burke, for allowing me to provide sponsor testimony today on SB 351. I welcome any questions from the committee.

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<sup>1</sup> International Overdose Awareness Day (2020). Activities 2020. Retrieved August 31, 2020, from: International Overdose Awareness Day: <https://www.overdoseday.com/activities-2020/>

<sup>2</sup> Ohio Department of Health (2019, December 4). 2018 Ohio Drug Overdose Data: General Findings. Retrieved July 28, 2020, from Ohio Department of Health: [https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/wcm/connect/gov/d9ee6d3b-bf62-4b4f-8978d7cfd11348f/2018\\_OhioDrugOverdoseReport.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CONVERT\\_TO=url&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE.Z18\\_M1HGGIK0N0JO00QO9DDDDM3000-d9ee6d3b-bf62-4b4f-8978-d7cfd11348f-mXhFqNO](https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/wcm/connect/gov/d9ee6d3b-bf62-4b4f-8978d7cfd11348f/2018_OhioDrugOverdoseReport.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CONVERT_TO=url&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE.Z18_M1HGGIK0N0JO00QO9DDDDM3000-d9ee6d3b-bf62-4b4f-8978-d7cfd11348f-mXhFqNO)

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, April 29). Retrieved July 28, 2020, from Drug Overdose Mortality by State:

[https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/drug\\_poisoning\\_mortality/drug\\_poisoning.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/drug_poisoning_mortality/drug_poisoning.htm)