



Re: House Health Committee Hearing June 21, 2017

June 19, 2017

Dear Chair Stephen Huffman,

My name is Casey Hippenhammer, and I am writing on behalf of the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Warren County. As a coalition, our members seek to educate and inform residents of Warren County about the impact of drug and alcohol abuse in order to prevent addiction. Today, we need your support in limiting access to prescription medications, specifically, highly addictive opiates, stimulants, and depressants. I would like to take the opportunity to share with the Health Committee recent evidence for the need for limiting access to prescription drugs.

In March, youth members of the coalition who are members of the Teen Alliance Council of Warren County, hosted their second annual youth summit. One of the exciting parts of the day, speed prevention, allowed us to collect information on different trends in the community related to the health and wellness of our students. The coalition posed the question to the students, "What things do adults do to keep youth from using prescription drugs? What measures do they not take?" The responses to these questions were consistent among the kids from five local Warren County schools. Students reported their parents "trust us to not use prescription drugs." Others said, "there's an unspoken rule that I don't take them," and that "prescriptions are in unlocked cabinets."

The responses from students throughout the day were very honest. We talked to them about underage drinking and other topics like violence and depression. The concerns we have about the answers regarding access to prescription drugs is twofold:

1. They have unguarded access to these medications should they or a friend decide to try them.
2. It appears parents are not discussing the dangers of prescriptions drugs with their children.

Access and availability are invitations for young people and others to treat their own ailments, be it physical or mental. There are a number of stories I have heard in my work from people who became addicted to prescription drugs when they were prescribed a painkiller post-surgery. The access to prescription medication has increased over the years, however, the education and tools for safe use are not keeping up with those trends. Creating requirements for special packaging for prescription medications is good prevention. We need your help in instituting state-level policies to decrease the availability addictive substances in the home.

We not only support measures to implement better packaging, we hope to be a part of the education process when these become available to pharmacies and patients. We must all do our part to end the opiate epidemic in Ohio and the United States. Thank you for your time and your work as a member of the Ohio legislature.

Sincerely,

Casey Hippenhammer, MSW, LISW

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