

Ohio Senate Finance Health and Medicaid Subcommittee

**Testimony of:
Carie Spicer, Founder of Save Our Billy
May 11, 2017**

Chairman Hackett, Vice-Chair Tavares, and members of the Senate Finance Health and Medicaid Subcommittee, good morning.

My Name is Carie Spicer. I am the founder of Save Our Billy and a local advocate for addiction and mental health recovery. More importantly, I am the child of, parent of, sibling of and friend to those suffering with the disease of addiction. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to share my story today.

I often tell people that I have always been around some form of addiction and mental illness my entire life. My very first experience with addiction was when my father was sentenced to 15 years to life for committing an unforgivable crime while high and drunk. As a result of his addiction, I was raised by my Mom and Step-dad, who I call Dad. I didn't realize it back then, but my mom also suffered from severe bouts of depression and bi-polar disorder. Both my parents abused a variety of pills, marijuana and alcohol on a daily basis. It wasn't long before Dad became an abusive alcoholic. I have seen abuse and witnessed things first hand I would never wish any child to experience. I have to say I am fortunate because when I was a young teenager, Dad found an AA program. His recovery planted a seed of hope for me that I still hold onto today.

I wish I could say that was the end of my story and all was well, but in 2009 our Dad passed away from cancer. It was around that time we discovered my little brother, Billy, was addicted to opioids. Billy was a star baseball player in high school and upon graduation, was recognized as a top young realtor in Columbus. But Billy suffered with knee problems from his early baseball days and then a car accident resulted in a neck injury. It was the perfect storm for him to realize his love for opioids. The housing market crashed and my Dad's death spiraled him into a depression he couldn't get out of. As his addiction grew, the doctors noticed his need for the drugs and they told him he was no longer a patient. It was a matter of a short period of time that he found heroin.

In March 2016, I started Save Our Billy as a cry to change the way we think about addiction and humanize the disease. Like so many other family members struggling with the realization a loved one is addicted, I was lost. As a result, I started a weekly meeting called Everyone's Recovery 360 at The Main Place in Newark, Ohio. The new meeting style allows all impacted by addiction to join. I have been told by those who attend that this approach not only provides support, but also helps to give a full understanding of a parent to their child who is in active addiction or helps someone in recovery to better understand the feelings of the family members who love them.

In addition to our meetings, I help those in need to get connected to necessary resources. The resources we currently have are vital to my ability to guide people to the path of recovery, however we need more of them. I can tell you that over the past year, I have answered over 1,000 messages of family, friends and those suffering from addiction who are seeking treatment. I hear again and again that someone is discouraged because of the lack of resource availability and options are already so limited with those with state insurance. If we limit that further, I fear the worst. I am convinced that resource availability and timing are key to getting someone into treatment and on the path to successful recovery.

I would also ask that you take into consideration children like me, who could benefit from community prevention programs and treatment options for their parents. Siblings like me, who seek lifesaving treatment for their brothers and sisters. And parents like me, so when you find out that your daughter is a homeless meth addict, you have the support and resources you desperately need to Save your Billy.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my story. At this time, I'd be glad to answer any questions you may have.