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Senator Huffman
Chairman of Health Committee

Dear Senator Huffman and fellow Senate Committee Members:

August 31st of each year is International Overdose Awareness Day. It is the one day we have that is dedicated to those families who have lost a loved one from addiction. Vigils and events are held in every community and in every state on this day when families come together to remember their loved ones.

We families have one simple ask. We would be so very grateful for you to consider approving Senate Bill 30 that would designate August 31st each year as Overdose Awareness Day in Ohio. It is a global event that aims to raise awareness of drug overdoses and reduce the stigma of drug related deaths. We are requesting to lower the flags throughout the state of Ohio in recognition of those losses. It cost absolutely nothing to do and yet will help in the healing and the stigma from those grieving these horrendous deaths.

I personally ask as it is a cause very dear to my heart. In June 2018, I lost my youngest son Ryan, to a fentanyl overdose. It is by far the very worst thing I could have imagined. Your life as you know it will never be the same. His addiction took everything from him. I know he tried so many times to escape the clutches of his disease but drugs won. He was not only a son, and brother, but also a father of three beautiful children. This should not be happening to our children. We are losing an entire generation and there doesn't seem to be any answers.

I speak for so many families across the state of Ohio that have also lost loved ones to this fatal disease. Our nation is currently fighting the COVID19 pandemic, but the opioid epidemic is sweeping our nation in a more silent, but just as sinister way. Unfortunately, these deaths are being often overlooked because they are looked at as the "addict" being responsible for their own demise.

Statistics from the CDC are showing over 81,000 drug overdose deaths in the United States in the 12 months ending in May, 2020, the highest ever recorded in a 12 month period. Ohio deaths have also increased 7.8% just in 2020. Those in recovery could not attend meetings, those often looking for help were turned away because beds were full, facilities closed and support was minimal. Unfortunately, many without support often turn back to the lifestyle and many more overdoses and deaths resulted.

With this, I humbly ask for your help in making August 31st every year Overdose Awareness Day.

It would mean so much to so many. While we will never forget what we lost, we may be able to change the way our nation, looks at those who have lost their battle.

Thank you,

Betty Churchill