

Dr. Terry Johnson

State Senator

14th District



Sponsor Testimony

Senate Bill 137

Senate Health Committee

May 28th, 2025

Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Liston and members of the Senate Health Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 137.

The opioid addiction crisis in Ohio must be attacked on multiple fronts. Currently, I am moving legislation that positively addresses both the recovery housing side of this effort as well as expanding prevention education for our children K-12. This legislation in particular is yet another piece in that fight, aiming to assist those at the ground level of opioid addiction.

Simply put, Senate Bill 137 is a gateway to recovery. Upon passage of this legislation, for those admitted to a hospital's emergency department—whether that be for addiction related issues or otherwise—if the patient shows any signs or symptoms of opioid use disorder, then once they are discharged from the hospital they shall receive a dose of an opioid reversal drug. This dose will also come with instructions on how to administer the opioid reversal drug, harm reduction strategies, information regarding available service in their area, as well as treatment and peer counseling options.

Here is the reality of the situation; many of those addicted may refuse these lifesaving resources, while for some this may be their

initial wake-up call. The hospital emergency department can often be seen as the frontline of the opioid addiction crisis, with overdoses rampant, Ohio seeing over 3,600 opioid overdose deaths in 2023 alone, accounting for 82% of all drug overdoses within the state.¹ By simply increasing patients' access to opioid reversal drugs and increasing outreach to recovery, we should see this number decrease.

According to the Naloxone Project's Ohio Chapter, only 42% of Ohio's hospitals participate in the distribution of opioid reversal drugs. Through collaboration between OMHAS's Project DAWN, private health plans, and Ohio Medicaid, I want to ensure ever emergency department's participation. Hospitals can receive opioid reversal drug stockpiles obtained through OMHAS at no charge. Additionally, Medicaid and all of Ohio's health providers already cover the reversal drug for any doses the hospitals must purchase on its own to meet the needed demand.

My office has worked extensively and collaboratively with multiple interested parties in crafting the language for this legislation, including the Naloxone Project, Ohio Hospital Association, Ohio State Medical Association, Ohio Association of Health Plans, OMHAS, and Ohio Medicaid. This legislation should come at no surprise and represent our best possible effort to help those wrestling with opioid addiction.

Thank you again for your time and attention regarding this important matter. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

¹ Ohio Department of Health, 2023 Ohio Drug Overdose Report (latest figures as of May 2025), <https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/violence-injury-prevention-program/media/2023-annual-ohio-drug-overdose-report>.