



## **Senate Bill 137**

Senate Health Committee Proponent Testimony

June 4, 2025

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of Senate Bill 137 on behalf of the Ohio Naloxone Project.

I am a board-certified physician in emergency medicine and addiction medicine. After graduating from Kent State and Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, I trained at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland to return to Ohio where I currently practice.

We are urging your support of Senate Bill 137 providing the payment and distribution of Naloxone from emergency departments and hospitals. This bill would empower healthcare providers to dispense this life-saving medication directly to the those who need it most.

Naloxone has been proven to save the lives of those overdosing from opioids and offers an important “gateway to recovery” proving Ohioans concern for the lives of other Ohioans. While Naloxone is available over the counter, data demonstrates about 98 % of all Naloxone prescriptions are unfilled emphasizing cost, stigma and lack of accessibility continue to create unnecessary barriers to access. Those in the grip of addiction and their loved ones often leave emergency departments without the tools to save lives in the event of an overdose.

Over the counter availability has not solved the opioid crisis. Stigma surrounding addiction and the cost of naloxone at pharmacies are persistent challenges. It is imperative that we meet people where they are, which is in emergency departments after an overdose or related crisis, and ensure they leave with naloxone free of charge and with the guidance for its use.

Similar legislation in Washington, Oklahoma and Colorado (where close to 98 % of all emergency departments dispense Naloxone) would aid our state greatly.

Requiring insurance companies and Medicaid to reimburse for naloxone is a meaningful step forward in combating our ongoing opioid epidemic. Recent data would indicate that Ohio has gone from being second only to the state of West Virginia for opioid overdose deaths in the United States, to #5, we still have a long ways to go.

Please support this vital legislation and help ensure that all Ohioans regardless of their financial situation, race, creed or sexual orientation can access this critical medication when they most need it.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to improving the health and safety of our state.

Please feel free to reach out to me if you need any further information or have any questions.

Sincerely,

James Neuenschwander MD. FACEP. FASAM