

Ohio Senate Finance Committee

Testimony of:

Adena Pennington

Chairman Oelslager, Ranking Member Skindell, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, my name is Adena Pennington.

I was 14 years old when I had my first experience with alcohol. At 18 years old I had my first experience with opiates. The impact drugs and alcohol have had on my life is significant. I have lost jobs, discontinued my education, acquired a criminal record and lost my license at one point. I have been to jail more times than I can count and have a felony. I was on probation and participated in drug court. All of this resulted in giving my children away to family members to care for. I damaged relationships with everyone while I was using. I couldn't see beyond my use and there were times that I wanted to die

Incarceration physically removed from my addiction and I had to be held accountable for my actions. I had to surrender completely and ask for help. I had to work a program openly and honestly and take suggestions. In addition to counseling, I benefited from Vivitrol for 16 months. This helped me deal with cravings and have a clear mind. I had to be given another chance not given up on.

My life today is exactly how it should be, not perfect, but nowhere near the way it used to be. Not even close. I no longer have to worry about when or how my next high will come. I can sleep today. I have a healthy relationship with my children and – most important - I am present for them. I think clearly today and I don't react all of the sudden. I had to relearn basic skills and learn how to accept things, people, and situations. I am absolutely content in my life, I have goals, and I strive to help the next struggling person. I feel my life has purpose today.

My problem was never stopping alcohol and drugs, it was staying stopped, and I couldn't do it alone. Today I have a network of people who I can reach out to if my thinking becomes distorted or if I feel like I'm about to self-destruct. I work a 12 step program to the best of my ability and attend 12 step meetings, I have a counselor I see once a month, and I stay in contact with other recovering individuals. I no longer associate with any old "using acquaintances."

I give back to other addicts/alcoholics. I reach out and I tell on my addiction when it tries to resurface. I am fully aware of myself today and I finally know who I am.

Thank you.