



Chair Carruthers, Vice Chair Pavliga, and Ranking Member Boyd:

On behalf of the City of Whitehall, I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and express our support for House Bill 328, which would establish the Governor's Office of Drug Policy.

The opioid crisis is an issue that can affect anyone. Throughout the state, there are people in addiction looking for help and do not know where to turn. Families, communities, and friends willing to help are not sure whom to turn to for information or resources. House Bill 328 would help address these issues.

A few years ago, the Whitehall Division of Fire established the SAFE Station program. SAFE stands for "stop addiction for everyone". This program provided a service that could direct admit someone suffering from addiction to treatment without risk of law enforcement intervention or prosecution. When we opened the doors, we expected that maybe five people a month might utilize the service. Many times, we would see five or more in a day. The reasons this program worked were we had people willing to search out treatment options and partners at the county government level searching for funding to keep treatment options available. We are living proof this type of program can be successful.

As we established this program, we often thought it would be great if the state had an agency that we could turn to for resources such as established best practices, funding ideas, or treatment resources. House Bill 328 recognizes this need in addition to many others.

The City of Whitehall thanks Representative Brown for championing this effort and we urge you for passage of HB 328.