



Proponent Testimony - Senate Bill 296
Senate Health Committee
March 23, 2022

Thank You Chairman Huffman, Vice Chairman Antani, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee for the opportunity to give testimony on Senate Bill 296. Chairman, as you know, this is a very important bill that will save lives, and I thank you and Senator Manning for your leadership on it.

I am Thomas Stuber and I present today as the President of the Ohio Alliance of Recovery Providers (OARP), an organization representing more than 40 of the largest addiction treatment and prevention agencies throughout Ohio. OARP strongly endorses this legislation and sees it as a critical intervention to address the opiate epidemic. I am also President of The LCADA Way, the largest behavioral health agency specializing in substance use disorder treatment and prevention in Lorain, Medina, and Erie Counties, and we have just recently opened services in Cuyahoga County.

In 2014, The LCADA Way jumped on the opportunity to promote Naloxone (Narcan) when it was introduced as a pilot study in Lorain County thanks to Senate Bill 57, sponsored by then Senator Gayle Manning. It became an important step in saving the lives of individuals who were opiate-addicted and dying of an overdose. Because they survived, many were able to access treatment and are now functioning/contributing members of society. In fact, I have seen many attend my courses at Lorain Community College who have gone on to become substance abuse counselors. It goes without saying that they would not have had that opportunity to help others if they had died.

Fentanyl test strips will provide the same opportunity. We are in our fourth phase of the opiate epidemic. The first phase was prescription narcotics, followed by heroin, then fentanyl, and now fentanyl being mixed with psychostimulants. While we have seen overdose deaths from prescription narcotics decrease, we are now seeing overdose deaths spike. Last year we saw overdose deaths increase 22% and we are predicting an increase of over 28% this year.

Treatment does work and people do recover. There are more than 21.5 million Americans today in long term recovery. We cannot treat someone if they are dead. This legislation will give us a chance to treat many who otherwise would die before they were able to access care.

Lorain County implemented Quick Response Teams to follow up with overdose survivors and their families in an effort to engage them in treatment and recovery. Since 2021, 44.2% have been actively engaged in treatment, and another 23.8% are in the process of moving toward treatment. These are 311 individuals who will now have another chance.

It is critical that we embrace these learnings going forward and build them into our practices so that we can continue to reach those in need and provide lifesaving services. The opiate epidemic is still raging with overdose deaths in Ohio expected to increase by more than 28% this year. Increasing access and availability to Naloxone as well as providing a means to test for deadly fentanyl will help us address this and ultimately save lives.

Thank you for the opportunity to present. I welcome any questions.

Thomas Stuber
OARP President