



# Franklin County Coroner's Office

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TESTIMONY OF DR. ANAHI ORTIZ, FRANKLIN COUNTY CORONER, IS SUPPORT OF HB 231

My name is Dr. Anahi Ortiz, and I serve as the Franklin County Coroner. I am honored to present testimony to The House Health Committee in support of House Bill 231.

We are all too aware of the epidemic of addiction that has gripped our state and our community. Opiate and heroin abuse and fatalities present one of the most challenging, startling and tragic public health policy issues that we have faced in our lifetimes. I applaud this committee and the members of the Ohio General Assembly for making this issue a legislative priority.

In my job and as a founding member of the Franklin County Opiate Crisis Task Force, I unfortunately see far too many, lives – particularly among young people – taken by drug addiction. The Columbus Dispatch reported in April that about two people a day are dying from drug overdoses in Franklin County. Just last year, 144 people in our county died after overdosing on the highly potent and dangerous drug fentanyl and/or fentanyl analogues. Opioid related deaths are roughly double the number of people who die from homicides.

We need to do more, and we need to try to stop addiction before it starts.

There is no magic or perfect solution, but House Bill 231 is an excellent approach to keeping opioids out of the hands of particularly young people, who often start on the path to addiction by pilfering or stealing pain pills from a family medicine cabinet, or the home of a relative, friend or neighbor.

Offering consumers who are prescribed opioids the opportunity to receive a Locked Prescription Valve, or LPV, from their pharmacist is a proven method of keeping kids away from drugs.

The problem of prescription drug abuse is so widespread that the *Columbus Dispatch* published a story [March 20](#) with the eye-opening headline: **Kids getting hands on adults' pain pills, study finds**. A study by the Center for Injury Research and Policy and the Central Ohio Poison Center at Nationwide Children's Hospital found that poison-control centers nationwide receive calls about children and teenagers exposed to opioid-prescription pain pills an average of 32 times a day - or once every 45 minutes. The findings show that adults must safely store prescription opioids and get rid of expired or unused tablets after an illness or injury.

We know now from the 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health that young people frequently get their drugs by taking them from family and friends who have opioid prescriptions: **More than half of the nearly 1 million 12- to 17-year-olds who reported misusing a prescription pain reliever said they got it from a friend or relative.**

The time has come for a new, common sense approach to this very complex and damaging epidemic. With your help and with the passage of House Bill 231, we can all work together to make a difference.

Dr. Anahi Ortiz

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