

PROPONENT TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB231 FROM SGT. GREG MORGAN, HAMILTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, RENU UNIT

Good morning. and thank you for allowing me to offer Proponent Testimony in support of House Bill 231 to the esteemed members of the Ohio House Health Committee. It is truly an honor to be here today and address the committee.

My name is Sgt. Greg Morgan. I am a member of the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office assigned to the Regional Narcotics Unit, also known as RENU, which is comprised of narcotics agents from the Sheriff's office as well as the Cincinnati Police Department, Green Township Police Department and Anderson Township. RENU is designed to investigate criminal organizations and individuals primarily responsible for the illegal trafficking of controlled substances in the Greater Cincinnati area. RENU also assists local, state and federal law enforcement agencies when requested.

I have spent nearly 30 years involved in law enforcement with a focus on illegal drugs and narcotics. Let me say with full confidence and with the depth and breadth of my experience that in my professional opinion the use of lockable containers proposed in House Bill 231 will help prevent opioid misuse and addiction.

I have in the past encountered a type of lockable containers that are sold commercially. I remember thinking the first time I saw one, "what a great idea." I knew immediately that anything that prevents people - especially kids, teenagers and addicts - from getting to and abusing opioids is a good idea. But the bottles sold on the Internet are expensive and not that many people are aware the product even exists.

One of strongest components of House Bill 231 is that a pharmacist will have to offer the lockable container to the consumer, who may not even know these products are available. And given the low cost, I truly believe that a large number of contentious and concerned Ohioans will choose to pay a little extra for a whole lot of safety and peace of mind.

There are often times when those who make our laws and policies have to enact legislation to protect the public - even when the public doesn't seem like it wants to be protected. People complained about smoking bans and mandatory seat belt laws. But think of the lives that have been saved by enacting those.

Lives can also be saved by this piece of legislation.

I arrest and confront hundreds of opioid and heroin addicts every year. I always ask how they got hooked on drugs. So many times, people tell me they had a back injury or chronic pain, were prescribed pain medicine, and then when the prescription ran out, they started looking for pills wherever they could find them - on the streets or all too often from the medicine cabinet of a family member, friend or neighbor.

And once they can't find the pills, they turn to heroin because it is cheap, available and potent. Make no mistake; there is a direct path to using and abusing opioids to heroin addiction. I unfortunately see it every day I am on the job, as do the law enforcement officers in your communities.

We also see too many young people - teenagers and even pre-teens who still live at home - getting started on pain pills after sneaking a few out of the bottles in their own medicine cabinets or from the homes of their relatives and friends. They figure, no one will miss a few; and they are probably right. But those few pills can easily lead down a dark, dangerous and deadly path to heroin. And that's why it's important to keep the pills locked up with one of these prescription bottles.

So I ask you today, as the leaders of our state, to support House Bill 231. It will make our state safer, keep kids away from drugs and help make a difference in our battle with the opioid and heroin epidemic.

Finally, I would like to thank the sponsors and co-sponsors of this legislation for showing tremendous, proactive leadership on one of the most difficult issues we face. Every community in our state has been touched by the opioid and heroin epidemic that has spread across Ohio. This bill will help block the path to addiction that so many thousands of Ohio individuals and families are now struggling with.

Thank you again for giving me the time to discuss this very important topic.

Respectfully submitted

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