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Written Testimony in response to SB 59

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that 70,237 Americans died from drug overdoses in 2017, of which 47,600 were opioid related. Also in 2017, 11.1 million people reported misuse of prescription opioid pain medications, nearly 900,000 people used heroin, and 2.1 million people suffered from an opioid use disorder.

Because of this ongoing crisis and the continued deaths from opioids (prescription opioids, heroin, and illicit synthetic opioids like fentanyl), we must continue an “all hands on deck” approach to prevent opioid misuse and treat those with opioid use disorder, to decrease the deadly effects of addiction until sustained recovery is achieved. One such intervention that can reduce overdose deaths is naloxone, a drug antagonist that reverses the effects of opioids and can be life-saving when an opioid overdose occurs. Naloxone is highly effective and has saved lives from opioid overdoses, but can only do so if it is in the right hands, at the right time. Healthcare providers have a critical role in assuring this occurs across all populations at risk. Locally over 13,640 kits have been distributed through Project DAWN’s inception with a known rescue count of lives saved at 2,245.

As we continue to battle this epidemic in Ohio it is critical that we continue to increase access to naloxone for those individuals and families dealing with this deadly disease. Increased access to naloxone will continue to reduce the number of fatal opioid deaths offering those suffering from an opioid use disorder an opportunity to enter treatment. Many people are still unaware that you can obtain Naloxone without a prescription. Through education of pharmacy staff and the general public we can continue to help increase access to this life saving drug.

On behalf of The Health Commissioner of Cuyahoga County

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