

Testimony to be given October 18, 2023 on HB 230 (Drug and human trafficking bill) By Pastor H. Berry Carter

Some Stats: 2021 – Drug overdose deaths (106,699), Alcohol deaths (140,000). The present approximate population in Canton and Massillon Ohio is 103,000.

Vietnam War: November 1955 to April 1975, deaths were 58,000.

In Stark County presently I haven't heard anyone address the huge financial burden drug addiction has placed on our Courts and Health Care (Hospitals), and the homelessness issue. Research I've done- approximately 70% of court cases are related to Drug Addiction and Alcohol.

Personal Story: Our daughter Melissa Mae Carter – born December 27, 1979

> Little Girl: She was a cuddler, loved people. At the Doughnut Kettle- a local place we would frequent together as a family- she adopted an older couple (Grandpa and Grandma Dale) - stayed connected with until their final years. On trips to grocery store - she made a friend with an older lady employed there who she called brown eyes- and she called our little Missy blue eyes- for obvious reason while still a toddler. Again – stayed in touch into teenage years.

> Missy joined the Army her and trained as Military Police. Met her husband in boot camp and married on completing A.I.T. training. My grandson Tristan was born who has now been serving in Army for 4 ½ years as E.O.D. tech/team leader/Sargeant. She divorced after a few years- military life was difficult. Second marriage brought beautiful granddaughter Taylor.

> Worked at Bombay Sitar as waitress (Hostess) and connected with many people in our community. Just her smile would connect with people.

> First started drinking – Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character!

> Went to school to be social worker- got Associate's degree and Bachelors degree. Then on to Masters in counseling to be Drug Abuse Counselor.

> After her military service she had some back issues. She started on pain meds. Talked to Doctor about surgery but didn't pursue. Slow downward spiral! Could no longer get prescriptions so went to street.

> Lost her job. College loan debt piled up - she took full amount for school. Lost custody of kids. Fast cash businesses (legal loan sharks). Sought treatment and counseling but always came up short- ended up going back to bad relationships. (COLLATERAL DAMAGE)! Raised our grandson final four years of school.

> Two theft charges, jail. "She was not a criminal." Overdosed twice!

> Moved to Columbus where boyfriend lived. Saw her several times end of 2021. Best visits in several years when we saw her in November- despite her ongoing issues with drugs and mental health issues. In March of 2022- we were in Indiana helping a family member who had passed away. While in Indiana we were calling to get her into treatment, she had extreme anxiety. My last conversation was "you really need to go, great things are ahead". She responded "I'm just like you dad- I want to help people". Pick up was planned with treatment center but upon my calling to make sure she was pick up they delayed because she was allergic to meds they use for treatment and she had to see local Doctor.

> After last conversation there was no response by phone or text. A few days later (March 5, 2022) my wife and I found her dead on floor at her home.

> While in her neighborhood one lady approached us and said Missy was so friendly. She said Missy kept an eye on her son when she was working. She would tell him to get home if she saw him doing something he shouldn't be doing.

**Not a criminal – just needed good long-term rehabilitation help and distancing from the drug dealing links everywhere...

In closing- I want to thank Rep. Abrams and Rep. Swearingen for this legislation that they are proposing that will greatly help our judges in the state of Ohio to hold people accountable for dealing drugs and producing pills that have killed so many in our state.

