

Ohio House of Representatives

House Insurance Committee

Proponent Testimony on House Bill 250

November 4, 2015



Alyssa Apostolakis

February 13, 1994-March 18, 2015

www.fightingforalyssa.org

Hello, thank you for this opportunity to speak. My name is Brian Malone and this is my wife Lea Heidman. We are from Medina, Ohio.

This past March, our daughter Alyssa passed away from a heroin overdose. She had just turned 21 in February. She was a vivacious loving person, bubbling with life and always helping others. She spent her time in college, working, donating her time to philanthropies, and using heroin. It was her dirty little secret that she was ashamed of.

When she was an adolescent, she was prescribed pain killers many times due to frequent injuries... a broken leg, a broken arm, and extensive oral surgeries. She was given prescriptions of 30 and sometimes more to be dispensed as needed for pain. She usually took them multiple times a day. The doctors would tell us to “stay ahead of the pain” and suggested that we wake her up when she was sleeping and give her the pain killers. We listened to and obeyed the doctors. They were the “subject matter experts.”

Alyssa enjoyed the euphoria she received from taking pain killers and it was easy for her to medicate herself. They sold them at school rampantly, and without stigma. They were usually left-over prescriptions from other kids and their parents. They were from a doctor and were pills given to them, previously, by their loving parents.

Alyssa became an addict, with an addict’s brain, and at the age of 16, she intentionally overdosed on prescription pills. She was in and out of treatment for the next two years.

In 2012, she graduated from a therapeutic behavioral high school and went to college in Asheville, North Carolina. She had a boyfriend who

was addicted to oxycodone from a previous sports injury and who was using heroin. Alyssa began using heroin with him. He passed away last year.

It is with great sadness, that we have come to learn that Alyssa's story is not an unusual one. The transition from opiate use to heroin has now become common.

We cannot bring our daughter back but we can participate in the changes which need to take place to help others and we strongly feel that House Bill 250 is an integral component toward challenging this epidemic.

The public needs to understand that opiates are extremely dangerous, highly-addictive drugs and that there needs to be greater guardianship over the dispensing of these drugs. The past and current culture in regard to opiates needs to change.

These opiates are not just pain-killers. They are also people killers. Our daughter suffered pain, shame, and ultimately death from being an opiate addict, and we suffer every day from her tragic loss. This legislation may not be the answer, but it certainly can be a powerful tool to prevent the pain and heartbreak that our family has felt and will continue to feel for the rest of our lives.

Thank you, and we will answer any questions you may have.