

HB0427 - Criminal Procedure - Medical Emergency – Immunity

Committee: Judiciary

Date: February 17, 2023

POSITION: Support

Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I asking for you to give a favorable report on **HB0427 - Criminal Procedure - Medical Emergency – Immunity** because I think it can save lives. I am a paramedic and a registered nurse. I currently work in pediatric critical and emergency care – dealing with the sickest and most-badly injured children. I know a little about saving lives.

My older son, Sam, was a funny kid. The kind of little kid who wanted to know if the trash incinerator off of I-95 in Baltimore was where they made clouds or why a snowman didn't come alive when you put a hat on its head. The kind of older kid who gave his lunch money to a homeless person he saw digging through a dumpster for food and taught most of the younger kids in the neighborhood to ride a two-wheeler. Sam was everyone's friend.

Sam, though, grew into a troubled young man who fought mental health issues and substance abuse. He fought his disease as best he could. But I know from my working life, sometimes you can do everything right with a patient and still have an unhappy outcome. We lost Sam to a Fentanyl overdose on May 24th of last year. He was 22.

When he died, Sam was serving out a probation before judgement verdict for the kind of things that happen with a person with a drug problem. I ask no sympathy for his crimes, but only for a little understanding that this wasn't a bad kid. This was kid with problems. We tried desperately to get Sam help. He was reluctant because he was worried that he would be in violation of his probation. He feared that consequence enough to risk his life and that was exactly what it cost him everyone that loved him.

The other thing I know from working life is that, when you lose a patient, there is only one thing you can do - go try to save the next one. And that's why I'm here, because I think the protections provided in this bill can help do that. It is the one thing my broken heart can ask for that it might still get. I have included a letter signed by 30 physicians, nurses, first responders, and other healthcare providers who agree.

There will be opposition – probably from local state's attorneys who forget that their job is to seek justice – not conviction rates. They are going to give you some wild hypotheticals. We will not solve this problem with conviction rates – 50 years of losing a war on drugs taught us that - and it's not a wild hypothetical. It's a public health crisis. It's more than 2000 dead Marylanders every year. It's a father finding his son – his son who thought trash could become clouds and snowmen could dance – cold and dead in his room.

That next one is out there, and you can help save him with a favorable report on this bill. I am happy to take any questions you might have.

Thank you,

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