

Citizen Testimony on HB0295 Overdose Awareness Day

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I'm here to ask you for a favorable report on **HB0295 Overdose Awareness Day**.

My older son, Sam, was funny kid. The kind of little kid who thought the trash incinerator on I-95 in Baltimore was where they made clouds, and once couldn't understand why a snowman he'd made didn't come alive when a hat was placed on its head. It wasn't all rosy, though. As Sam grew into an adult he struggled with mental health and addiction. He fought his disease as best he could. Sam died from a fentanyl overdose in May of 2022. With his death, the world lost a little of its light and goodness and my world – my family's world – was shattered.

The thing is, I'm not here to ask you to designate August 31st as Overdose Awareness Day for me. I'm quite sure I couldn't be more aware of the overdose crisis in our state if I tried. I'm also not here to ask you to do it for Sam's memory, because nothing could make his memory greater in my mind. I'm not here to ask you to do it for the memories of Matt or Rob – brothers of friends, or Kevin – a former neighbor, or even Walker – a kid who grew up with Sam. I'm not asking for that because I know nothing can bring them back, and no piece of legislation can unbreak their family's hearts any more than it can unbreak mine. I'm asking you to report favorably on this bill because if it fails, I'll be back here next year. I'll be back here with a longer list of names. A new set of names. A new set of families whose worlds have been shattered.

The overdose crisis is a man-made problem. Man-made problems require man-made solutions. We've done it before. We've taken on man-made plagues and beaten every one we've set our mind to beating. Highway deaths, polluted waterways, the ozone hole, second-hand smoke – all turned around simply because we decided to turn them around. We can do the same with opioid overdoses.

The first step in solving any problem is making sure people are aware of the consequences of not. Awareness isn't a billboard, a soundbite, or a hashtag. It's a step. It's the first step towards a solution. It's the first step toward my list of names not getting any bigger, and the first step toward the next father's heart staying unbroken.

To that end, I ask you for a favorable report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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