

SB0843
OPPOSED
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Dear Senators,

As a nurse, I know that the best way to promote a positive outcome for a patient is to have all of the pertinent medical data available. This would most certainly include whether or not an individual has been using drugs, legal or otherwise.

While working in the ICU at Sinai Hospital, I cared for a man with an alcohol drip. He was in the hospital for abdominal surgery but needed to be in the intensive care unit for monitoring with the alcohol drip. Part of his treatment plan included the fact that he was an alcoholic and how much alcohol was in his system. We needed to prevent the life-threatening condition of Delirium Tremens, also known as DT's, brought on by alcohol withdrawal. I've taken care of patients brought in experiencing DT's. It is a medical emergency requiring a team of people starting IV's, monitoring the vital signs, administering meds, etc. It's not something you want anyone to endure.

Likewise, during my clinical rotation for labor and delivery at Union Memorial Hospital, I regularly saw women in preterm labor due to "speedballing" which was the use of heroine and cocaine together. In order to properly care for these women and their babies, it was necessary to know what drugs they used and what levels were in their systems.

Forehand knowledge and preparation whenever possible are key to providing positive outcomes for patients. Postpartum care plans would be most effective if the medical team knows the woman might experience drug withdrawal. Medical personnel would be alert to signs and symptoms and prepared for medicines needed to treat the woman. Likewise for her baby. In addition, discharge planning would include planning for drug counseling and services.

Just as the medical team would want to know if a woman is diabetic for proper treatment, the same is true in the case of the woman using drugs. Knowing a patient's weight is another pertinent fact for prescribing correct dosages. Asking about weight, medical history and drug history is not about judgement. All of that information is within scope of care and it is about applying appropriate interventions. A separate question is not necessary or helpful.

Healthcare professionals are in the business of helping people recover. This bill seems to put obstacles in the way of providing appropriate care for women and their babies. Putting the question of drug use separate from the general intake is a hindrance to the care of the woman. A separate question would serve only to highlight the drug behavior over any other information and that would make the woman feel more uncomfortable, being a pregnant woman, and inclined to not be entirely truthful. Usually, in medical situations, time is of the essence and the sooner information is known, the better for proper intervention.

I urge you to not create obstacles in healthcare and vote in opposition of Senate Bill 0843.

Thank you.