

House Bill 811

Hospitals - Overdoses - Testing for Fentanyl

Individual Providing Testimony: Juli Shamash, Director – Drug Awareness Foundation;

Position: Favorable.

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk,

I lost my son Tyler to a fatal fentanyl overdose in 2018, shortly after his 19th birthday. My family was one of the hundreds of thousands that has lost a loved one to this lethal drug. Unfortunately, fentanyl is being found in just about every drug out there, ranging from marijuana to cocaine and pressed pills. That means that kids just like Tyler continue to succumb to accidental fentanyl overdoses, often times unaware they've ingested the substance.

This is why California unanimously passed Tyler's Law, a commonsense measure that standardized fentanyl testing procedures in hospitals. Although Tyler had a history of opioid addiction, he was not tested for fentanyl when he sought medical attention at an emergency room in 2018. If Tyler had been tested, there's a chance he would still be with us today.

HB 811 advances the same sort of lifesaving policies that we fought for in California. I can personally speak to the fact that this bill has the potential to save lives. As you know, too many hospitals are currently failing to provide fentanyl testing. This bill closes that gap and does it in a responsible way that adds a negligible burden to hospital staff.

This bill has my full support and I encourage the committee to give the effort its full support. Thank you for your time and please let me know if you have any questions at my email, xxxxx.

Sincerely,

Juli Shamash