

Cindi Alvey

Bills 1229 and 1230 Testimony

2/28/2024

My name is Cindi Alvey . I'm here in support of Bills 1229 and 1230.

To me, this is a matter of life and death. Unfortunately, for my son, these bills are too late. "Gas Station Heroin" - **Kratom, Tianeptine and Phenibut** - took over my son's life and caused his death at age 33. We must prevent this from happening to others, especially those under the age of 21.

We called him "JT". He was a Spirit of Columbia scholarship winner and graduated with honors from University of NC (one of the happiest days of my life). He had a successful IT career and was blessed with talent, intellect, looks, strength, and a heart of gold. He was and still is my pride and joy. His death broke many hearts. Over 250 family and friends attended his memorial.

But he suffered from anxiety and other behavioral challenges. He sought out pills and products like Kratom to relieve stress without any legal consequences. When he built up tolerance and **Kratom** wasn't enough, he turned to **Tianeptine and Phenibut**.

They claim these drugs treat anxiety and depression, improve memory, increase mental alertness and concentration, and boost energy levels. But it turned my honor student son into a zombie.

In fact, these drugs have no legitimate medical use. And I personally saw JT suffer with **increased heart rate, vomiting, depression, seizures, loss of consciousness, and coma**.

I also saw JT suffering in withdrawals with **depression, anxiety, and sleep disorders**... symptoms he thought these drugs would help him with... instead he told me those withdrawals felt "like death".

To avoid withdrawals, these pills must be taken every 2-3 hours!

Still... they are virtually unknown in the health and substance abuse space. JT was taken to 4 different hospitals in the state of Maryland with various symptoms I have mentioned. They each did their standard testing but no cause was ever identified. Not in ERs, sober homes, police investigations, Maryland Shock Trauma, not even the Baltimore Medical Examiner. Nobody tests, so nobody knows.

6 months before he died, he walked away from a rehab to try to kick his addiction on his own. He got a hotel room and bought Tianeptine. He was alone, had seizures, hit his head so hard it cracked his skull and left a gaping hole, broke his foot and fell into a coma. I personally saw the blood-stained room this happened in - there were **Tianeptine** pills and bottles everywhere. No mother should have to see that.

When that happened for the first time, in August 2021, he was in a coma almost a week at Maryland Shock Trauma and miraculously survived. But his addiction called him back and when the same set of events occurred in January 2022, he was not found until 3 days later. Unresponsive. Pronounced dead.

In truth, these bills do not go far enough. 9 states have made these drugs illegal - **Alabama and Kentucky** have labeled it a Schedule 1 substance. **Where is Maryland?**

This bill is a tiny step forward. A \$500 slap on the wrist for selling these drugs. \$500 vs. JT's death hardly seems enough. But it's a start. A step in the right direction, and I know Maryland will do more.

*- **Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Ohio and Tennessee.**