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House Bill (HB) 1245 & Senate Bill (SB) 1075

Criminal Law - Distribution of Heroin or Fentanyl Causing Serious Bodily Injury or Death (Victoria¹ and Scottie's² Law)

DATE : March 5, 2024
COMMITTEE: House Judiciary & Senate Judicial Proceedings
POSITION: FAVORABLE

Dear Chairman and Committee Members:

I am writing to express my wholehearted support of Victoria and Scottie's Law and ask for a favorable report. My endorsement stems from two distinct perspectives, both of which highlight the urgent need for legislative measures to address the escalating fentanyl crisis.

In my professional capacity as the Community Education & Outreach Liaison for the Office of the State's Attorney in Carroll County, I witness firsthand the devastating impact of fentanyl on our community. My role involves assisting individuals entangled in the court system and aiding citizens grappling with substance use disorders, particularly those who have experienced overdoses. Shockingly, the prevalence of fentanyl-related incidents has surged dramatically since 2016. It is important to highlight that Naloxone may not consistently prove effective, and there might be an insufficient supply to mitigate the effects of fentanyl, especially considering that it may require up to three times the usual dosage used for heroin or other opiates. Among the individuals I encounter, a concerning majority are unknowingly using fentanyl, emphasizing the urgency of intervention.

The alarming rise in fatal overdoses attributed to fentanyl is another pressing concern. Tragically, those selling these lethal substances are fully aware of the nature of the drugs they distribute. This clear knowledge on their part demands a decisive response to curb the explosion of fentanyl in our community. Another misconception is the actual "dealers" of fentanyl rarely are users of the death they peddle. Therefore, I strongly advocate for the passage of the Bill currently under your consideration.

On a personal note, as someone in long-term recovery from a substance use disorder, I am acutely aware of the challenges posed by addiction. Having battled a 15-year addiction to heroin in the past, I can attest to the profound impact of being ensnared by substances that jeopardize one's life. In today's context, where fentanyl has become the primary substance in opioid addiction, the risks are even greater. Especially to unknowing victims of these fatal poisonings.

During my struggle with substance dependency, I dealt with suppliers who, though not using the substances personally, deliberately provided me with heroin mixed with unidentified substances on a consistent basis. Today, the situation has escalated with fentanyl being the predominant drug of choice. I firmly believe that imposing substantial jail time for those trafficking in fentanyl that leads to a death can serve as a deterrent, particularly for individuals who do not use the drugs they sell.

There might be skepticism about why one would persist in helping those involved in illicit drug use. In response, I emphasize that my life's calling has been to save lives. Having been on the other side of the struggle, I have dedicated over two decades to actively contributing on the front lines, working towards positive change in my community. I am just one individual among many nationwide who remains unwavering in our commitment to this vital mission.

While deterrents may not dissuade those in the throes of addiction, they can potentially influence the behavior of those profiting from the sale of these dangerous substances. The proposed Bill, with its stringent penalties, has the potential to disrupt the supply chain of fentanyl and safeguard lives.

I appreciate your thoughtful consideration of this matter and your commitment to addressing the critical issue of fentanyl proliferation. Your support for Victoria and Scottie's Law is paramount in protecting our community from further harm.

Sincerely,

Tim Weber, CPP

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