

Written Testimony for HB1398F

Distribution of Heroin or Fentanyl Causing Serious Bodily Injury or Death – Victoria, Scottie, Ashley and Yader's Law.

I am in favor of Bill HB1398F.

September 19, 2021 I lost my brother Adam to Fentanyl poisoning. He thought he had purchased Heroin, but in fact it was a mix of 3 types of Fentanyl. He died instantly.

This day changed our family forever. Adam was fighting his depression. He had always struggled with his mental health as an adult. He didn't get hooked on heroin until he was 31. He was an EMT in Baltimore City at the time.

He wanted so much to be rid of this demon.

In the months preceding his untimely death, he was really struggling with his depression as I mentioned earlier. 2 weeks prior to September 19<sup>th</sup>, he had told my mom he was having suicidal thoughts and wanted to kill himself. He made an appointment at a very well-known outpatient facility and was told after his appointment that they could not help him since he was uninsured. We believe it was at that moment, he contacted a dealer and started using again after being clean for years. I begged him to let me take him to the Emergency Room. But it was still during the time of Covid with high ER waiting room times and he kept promising he was all right. He was fine.

The day of September 19<sup>th</sup> arrived, and Adam and my mom had a little argument the day before, so she was trying to give him some space. Too much space that she blames herself for every day. Around 9:30 that night, she had found Adam in his bathroom, needle still in arm. He had died approximately 2 hours before. He was just looking to ease his pain, not die. He shouldn't have died this way.

My family started a Non-Profit in his name- Adam's Light as a way to spread the news of addiction and help those that are fighting this fight every day.

This past August 31<sup>st</sup> we hosted our 2<sup>nd</sup> annual International Overdose Awareness Day Event. I had reached out to many elected leaders and only 1 showed up and supported our cause- County Councilman David Marks. I contacted multiple news outlets several times to do a story on Overdose Awareness Day and never heard back from any of them. No one wants to talk about it.

There is a stigma around addiction. We will continue to share Adam's story. We will continue to support those in our community who are still fighting. We will help those when and where we can with the resources we have. But it is time for people to be held accountable for the thousands and thousands of dying every day/month/year. This bill is a small piece of the puzzle, but a start. The problem unfortunately is so much bigger than the few of us testifying and the community leaders voting on this bill.

Thank you for your time.

Shelley Debelius

Founder Adam's Light, Inc.

501(c)(3) non profit