

**TESTIMONY AS PREPARED
OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL MIKE DEWINE
U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
CLEVELAND, OH
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Thank you, Senator Portman, for presiding over this very important field hearing today, as we discuss the opioid epidemic in Ohio.

Ohio is facing the worst drug epidemic I've seen in my lifetime. Every county, city, and village in Ohio is affected by the opioid problem. Quite candidly, the face of Ohio is becoming the face of heroin.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, nearly half a million persons in the United States died from drug overdoses between 2000 and 2014. But, in 2014 alone, 47,055 Americans died from drug overdoses, which was the highest number than in any prior year on record. For perspective, almost that same number of Americans -- 47,434 -- died in battle during the Vietnam War.

Since 2007, drug overdose deaths in Ohio surpassed deaths from motor vehicle crashes. The Ohio Department of Health reports that 2,482 Ohio residents died from unintentional drug overdoses in 2014. This is the highest number of deaths from drug overdoses on record -- a number that reflects a 17.6 percent increase over the 2,110 drug overdose deaths in 2013. Opioids, whether it's heroin or a prescription opioid, are involved in the majority of these deaths.

Tragically, we are seeing the impact of the drug epidemic in babies born to moms addicted to heroin or other opioids. The Ohio Hospital Association reported in 2013 that nearly \$100 million in healthcare related costs and 25,000 days in Ohio hospitals were connected to treating newborns impacted by neonatal abstinence syndrome.

We've also seen the evidence as it comes in to my office's state crime lab -- the Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI). Heroin cases began increasing dramatically in mid-2012, and since then, we've experienced an unprecedented number of heroin submissions. In fact, one out of every four cases coming through BCI lab involves testing for heroin.

The psychological barrier that stops someone from taking heroin is simply gone. And, the drug Mexican drug cartels have created the perfect business model to make it all the easier to feed someone's addiction. Their door-to-door delivery system makes calling for and getting heroin easier and cheaper than ordering a pizza!

True impact of our heroin epidemic is measured in lives lost, families devastated, and communities diminished. That's why my office is trying to combat the problem on several fronts.

In 2013, we established a heroin unit in my office that includes lawyers, investigators, and community outreach liaisons. We restructured some existing resources, added others, provided our law enforcement partners with new tools, and expanded our community prevention and education outreach.

Our community outreach team works with law enforcement, prosecutors, grass roots organizations, schools, clergy, and other citizens to help form a plan specific to that community to address the drug problem. This team helps communities identify needs and give recommended resources to address those needs. Recommendations include anything from implementing a school based prevention program that's working in another area of the state, accessing naloxone, or connecting the community with state resources.

Additionally, my office provides grants for law enforcement officers for drug use prevention education programs in schools. However, in most cases, limits on grant dollars and manpower usually allow these programs to be in one or two grade levels at most. In the 1980s, I served on President Reagan's National Commission on Drug Free Schools. The experts we had contact with routinely told us that repetitive, comprehensive, school-based education was necessary to successfully combat drug addiction.

Some schools today have implemented alternative programs, such as the National Institute on Drug Abuse's "Brain Power" curriculum in science courses or Generation Rx from the Cardinal Health Foundation and Ohio State University College of Pharmacy. I'm encouraged by these efforts and support the expansion of evidence-tested school-based prevention education programs. Our hope is that we can help put that psychological barrier back up so our children will understand the dangers of drug abuse.

Many addicts got hooked on heroin by first misusing prescription opioids. To address this issue, we partnered with the Ohio Department of Health and Drug Free Action Alliance to provide free drug collection bins to a number of local law enforcement agencies. We've also gone after those doctors who overprescribe painkillers. Since I took office in 2011, a total of 73 doctors and 22 pharmacists have had their licenses revoked or permanently revoked for violations involving improper prescribing or handling of controlled substances or illegal drugs.

I've also been very supportive of expanding access to naloxone for first responders. Naloxone was administered at least 74,000 times in Ohio between 2003 and 2012. More than 17,000 doses were administered in just the past two years. I'm pleased to report to you that we've renewed our agreement with Amphastar Pharmaceuticals, Inc. -- a manufacturer of naloxone -- to provide rebates to consumers, such as police departments and other non-federal government agencies that distribute the drug in Ohio. So far, almost 60 Ohio agencies have applied for more than \$151,000 in rebates.

In 2015, the law changed in Ohio to allow pharmacies to sell Naloxone over the counter without a prescription. Since then, we worked with several Ohio retail stores, including CVS, Kroger and Walgreens, who have agreed to sell Naloxone. This will also help families and friends who know someone who is addicted by letting them keep this life-saving medication on hand.

As Ohio's Attorney General, I am proud to be one of 38 Attorneys General who signed on to support passage of your 2016 Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA). As you know well, there is no magic bullet solution, but CARA's comprehensive approach would be a tremendous help to address the heroin problem in our state.

Government can't solve the heroin problem. And, we know that we cannot arrest or convict our way out of it, either. The truly effective solutions will come from citizens on a county by county, village by village, congregation by congregation basis. My office will continue to support families, schools, law enforcement, the faith-based community and others to bring hope and healing to those who struggle with substance abuse and addiction.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. I'm happy to answer any questions.