

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB0396

Public Health – Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program

Chair Pendergrass, Vice-Chair Pina Melnyk and Members of the Committee,

I am writing today to ask you to support HB0396.

I would like to tell you about a tragedy that happened in our family, and the reason why I support Bill HB0396. My 27 year old son, Alex Bement, died on May 4, 2019 of an accidental overdose. The cause of death was fentanyl toxicity.

Alex was bright, personable, funny and kind. He was an All-American athlete, and he was very loved by his family and many friends. He was a stand-out student and lacrosse player at Loyola Blakefield, then went on to study at University of Pennsylvania, where he played on their Division 1 lacrosse team.

Like many teens, he experimented with drugs, but by his second year at Penn, it had turned into a full blown addiction to opioids. He went to treatment, and over the next 8 years, he has several relapses, but he had a lot of success, too. He was a telemark ski instructor in Aspen, Colorado; he coached high school lacrosse; he was named First Team All-American at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul when he helped take their lacrosse team to the championship. He was a finisher in an Ironman Triathlon eight months before he died. He was thriving, happy and engaged in life.

However, that May, he had a relapse after 2 1/2 half years in recovery and that relapse cost him his life.

Alex had an illness—an illness that no family is immune to. And he didn't want to die. He didn't know the drugs he bought that day had fentanyl in them. If overdose prevention sites were readily available when he relapsed, he could still be here with us. Instead, a beautiful life was wasted because we're not talking about the crisis at hand and we're not doing nearly enough to address the problem. My loss is incredibly painful and unending, but I am far from alone since Alex died I have met many other Maryland families who have lost their children the exact same way. And there are thousands upon thousands of us across the country. How many more of us will it take for everyone to say enough is enough and be brave enough to pass some common sense legislation?

For these reasons, I am asking you for a FAVORABLE REPORT on HB0396.

Sincerely,
Liz Bement
Baltimore City Resident
Legislative District 46