

House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services Committee Hearing
SB21-011 Pharmacist Prescribe Dispense Opiate Antagonist
Tuesday, May 11, 2021

Chairperson Jenet and distinguished members of the Committee; my name is Ingrid Moore, from Longmont. I'm a concerned citizen writing on my own behalf **in support of** Senate Bill 21-011.

I strongly support this bill and urge all members of the committee to vote Yes.

My brother had a painful disc in his spine due to an injury. He was seeing a pain clinic and wearing an opioid-based patch for pain. When he attempted to wean himself off the medication (for various reasons) he suddenly found himself going through withdrawal, alone, at home. He had no idea he had become addicted! If his pharmacist could have offered an antagonist at the time he made his decision to quit, things might have gone much better. Although this wasn't life-threatening, it did cause him to go to the emergency room and was a frightening experience that lasted several days.

Local pharmacists are trusted allies and can help address the dramatic numbers of overdose deaths from opioid pain relievers and heroin in the United States. Many patients will trust their pharmacist and accept an opioid antagonist when they might not otherwise access it through a physician or some drug program they aren't affiliated with. Other states, as this bill proposes for Colorado, allow pharmacies to distribute naloxone in an outpatient setting without bringing in a prescription from a physician.

This bill will help save lives and could also dramatically reduce emergency room visits. I respectfully urge you to please vote Yes on this bill.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Ingrid Moore
Longmont, Colorado
11 May, 2021

As a former Assistant Fire Chief for more than thirty-two years, I have seen firsthand how the opioid epidemic has ravaged communities in Colorado. Time and time again, it has taken the lives of those we know and care for, often without warning. What makes these realities even harder to accept is that we know how to prevent these overdoses from becoming fatal for our patients.

We know that naloxone (Narcan) is a critical tool in our fight to combat the opioid epidemic and that expanded access to naloxone can reduce opioid overdose deaths. Especially now, against the backdrop of a pandemic and numbers that scream for help, our state legislature can act to help more individuals access this potentially lifesaving medication.

Overdose deaths in Colorado rose by 37% between January and June 2020, as compared to the same time frame in 2019, according to data from the [Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment](#). There has been an incredible 293% rise in deaths alone in the Denver Metropolitan Area, where I live. And according to the [National Drug Helpline](#), Colorado is among the 28 states that have been flagged under a “red alert” for increased risk of death from overdose of opioids and other drugs.

Fire Fighters are often the first to intervene in dire situations with patients who are struggling with a substance use disorder and have experienced an accidental overdose. As trained professionals, we rely on immediate access to naloxone to help revive someone in those moments. Naloxone is an FDA-approved medication that is used to reverse the effects of an opioid overdose and revive someone in a life-threatening situation. And it works – but only when people have immediate access to it when they need it most.

Fire Fighter’s aren’t the only ones who understand the need for expanded naloxone access. Both the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) and the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#) (FDA) support expanding access to naloxone and equipping those at risk of an overdose — along with their friends, family members, and neighbors — who often respond first to an overdose event.

The Colorado Legislature has the chance to do just that with [SB21-011](#), which would require a pharmacist who dispenses an opioid medication to an individual to inform the individual of the potential dangers of a high dose opioid—and to offer the patient naloxone in specific circumstances. Colorado pharmacists are already allowed to offer naloxone to individuals without a prescription under the state’s “standing order” but SB21-011 would give prescribers and providers the additional opportunity to educate patients about their risk of an overdose event in a non-stigmatizing way and equip them with potentially lifesaving medication at the pharmacy counter.

My Fire Fighter days may be over, but I stand with my Fire Fighter brothers and sisters, in recognizing that we must do everything we can to address the ongoing opioid epidemic in our state. This includes ensuring that all patients who may need it have access to naloxone. Our elected officials must pass [Senate Bill 21-011](#) without delay.

Assistant Chief (Ret) Tony Berumen, BS., EMT, retired from the Denver Fire Department last year.

Madam Chair, and Honorable Committee Members:

Good Afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 11. I am Dr. Lacey Berumen, a PhD 28 years of experience in treating patients and hundreds of patients in Colorado who have suffered from the effects of substance and particularly, opioid abuse. I have served, and serve, on numerous boards and councils for Colorado and national organizations and just this past year, wrapped up 6 years of service on the National Board of Directors for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). I am currently serving as the coordinator of the Colorado We Care Coalition, which is comprised of THIRTY EIGHT Colorado-based organizations, all in support of this bill. We have provided committee members with a coalition letter to that effect, with our names and logos attached.

Honorable Committee Members, Colorado and this Assembly has worked hard to take action to curb substance abuse over the past several years, yet we have come to a place in Colorado where something more needs to be done. The data speaks for itself and it is sobering to say the least. Let me share some numbers with you, and all of this is documented:

- During the COVID 19 pandemic, the rate of opioid overdose deaths has increased in the Denver Metro Area by 293%.
- During that same time period (comparing the first six months of 2019, to the first six months of 2020) the overdose death rate in the state has increased by 37%.
- The [National Drug Helpline](#) has identified Colorado as one of the 28 “red alert” states for increased risk of deaths from overdose of opioids and other drugs.
- According to a survey by Mental Health America, and reported by the news media here in Colorado just the other day, Substance Abuse puts Colorado at the bottom of mental health rankings in the states.

When you look at the data it becomes glaringly apparent that we are losing people at an incredible, and unacceptable rate in Colorado to opioid overdose. This is also having a devastating impact on families, as you have heard here today from other advocates and that only serves to increase lives-at-risk and contribute to the problem.

In short Honorable Members, this bill is not the complete solution to our drug abuse problem in Colorado and the nation, but there is no doubt that it will result in lives saved, long term health care costs lowered, and supporting it is simply the right thing to do. I want to thank the sponsors for bringing this legislation and urge your support. Thank you very much for your time and courtesy here today.

House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services

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Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Minona Gilmore For Self	Thank you Committee, I am in support of SB21-011 because it will save lives. In rural farming communities Covid has hit hard and people are trying to manage the emotional pain and losses with prescription medication. People don't know when you take too many of the wrong kind together it can stop your breathing and you can die. Everyone taking those opioid pills should get that Narcan spray it can save their life and if the pharmacist offers people can choose to say no thank you, but you don't know you need it until they tell you. Thank you for your time.
Chanel Berumen For Self	Thank you Chair person, I am in support of this bill. I have a childhood friend whose life was rocked after becoming addicted to prescription opiates,. When her doctor stopped giving them to her she turned to heroin. It cost her almost everything to get sober and get her life back. She's an amazing and beautiful person that could have died. More people should know about this and the pharmacist should be offering it to everyone that gets opioid pain meds. It can save their life. Thank you please vote yes.
Allison Harden For Beyond Betty	Good afternoon, My Name is Allison Harden and I am The Chief Engagement Officer at Beyond Betty. We stand in support of SB-11 as we believe it is a life saving measure that can reduce the overdose deaths in our state. Please join with us in your support of this legislation. Thank you