



Tuesday, March 13, 2018

Members of the House Public Health Care and Human Services Committee,

The Colorado Coalition for the Homeless respectfully asks for your support on HB18-1003, HB18-1007, and HB18-1136. Drug overdoses, led by opioid overdoses, are now the leading cause of death of Americans under 50, killing more people than car accidents, guns, or HIV at the height of the epidemic. Coloradans die in our state of overdose every 9 hours and 36 minutes. The bills you will be considering today will save lives.

Opioid addiction has no boundaries. This classification of drugs, illicit and prescription, affects people of all gender identities, socio-economic classes, and ages across our state and nation. However, a disproportionate number of people experiencing homelessness have a Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and many die from drug overdoses. A Boston study found that drug overdoses accounted for 17 percent of deaths among homeless persons, and opioids were responsible for 81 percent of those deaths. In addition, homeless adults aged 25 to 44 were nine times more likely to die from an opioid overdose than their housed counterparts.

Substance Use Disorders rarely exist in isolation. Mental health, physical health, affordable housing, and SUDs are intricately intertwined, and society's response must be comprehensive to support a person experiencing homelessness towards recovery.

The bills up for consideration today propose a number of critical steps, including establishing a study committee to assess possible prevention, intervention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery measures that will work for our state, increasing access to medication assisted treatment, and adding residential and inpatient substance use disorder services to Colorado's Medicaid program. These bills will begin to address our state's opioid epidemic in a tangible way, especially among the most vulnerable Coloradans.

In solidarity with those who have been impacted by the opioid epidemic in Colorado, I ask for a "yes" vote on HB18-1003, HB18-1007, and HB18-1136. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Cathy Alderman".

Cathy Alderman
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