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Re HB-1167 Reporting Of Emergency Overdose Events

House Judiciary Committee
Denver, Colorado 80203

Chair Lee and Committee Members:

My name is Bryon Adinoff. I am an addiction psychiatrist and Clinical Professor at CU Anschutz Medical Campus. I am here representing the Colorado Psychiatric Society, which supports HB-1167.

Prior to moving to Colorado upon retirement from full-time academia in 2018, I was the Distinguished Professor of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Research at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas and for over 30 years I was a physician in the Department of Veterans Affairs. I have published and spoken widely on the biological effects and treatment of addictive disorders and I am the Editor of *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*.

In 2015, while living in Texas, I spoke to their legislature in support of the Good Sam law. It did not become law and, along with only two other states (Kansas and Wyoming), Texas remains without a Good Sam law.

There is an excellent reason why 47 states, including Colorado, have wisely passed Good Sam laws. Since the onset of the opioid epidemic over 20 years ago, our country has lost almost 1,000,000 lives due to drug overdose, most of these due to opioids. You have heard many grieving parents share their stories of unfathomable loss. Yet, many of these deaths were preventable.

A person doesn't die from an overdose immediately. It usually occurs over a period of several hours, allowing time for medical intervention. A simple 911 call can often save an overdose victim's life. A review of the academic literature by the US General Accounting Office found a pattern of lower rates of opioid-related deaths in states that have Good Sam laws and an increased likelihood of individuals calling 911 if they are aware of these laws.

But if there are conditions limiting who is eligible for immunity for making the 911 call (as happened in HB21-1326), it dramatically decreases the likelihood that this lifesaving call will be made. As the individuals making the call are typically fellow users with similar problems as the overdose victim, it serves neither the victim nor society to expose the caller to arrest and incarceration. The optimal outcome in these situations is for the victim's life to be saved. Hopefully, the victim will use this experience to reconsider their drug use and seek treatment. If they die, then this option dies with them.

Two weeks ago, I spent 5 days in Vienna attending the UN 66th Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), the commission that has oversight over the substances under international control under the International Drug Control Conventions. I was pleasantly surprised to hear the CND Chair and CND Executive Director speak of the enormous financial, personal, and cost of drug prohibition – yet noting that every year the supply of drugs has increased. Volker Türk, the High Commissioner of the UN Office of Human

Rights stated “It is clear to many that the so-called War on Drugs is not working and a number of countries have led the way forward. We must continue this progress in all regions of the world order and stop this so-called War on Drugs. Instead, let us focus on transformative change, crafting drug policy based on evidence which puts human rights at the center...and ultimately will improve the lives for the millions of individuals effected.”

The Good Sam bill is an essential part of this transformative change. Let Colorado continue to be part of this transformative change that treats individual drug use as a human rights issue, not a criminal act. I strongly encourage you to support HB-1167.

Sincerely,

Bryon Adinoff, MD