

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in support of Taylor's Law and the Martinek family. Erin, Taylor's older sister and I met as freshmen in high school 15 years ago, and ever since then, our families have grown up together. Taylor was my bother. His smile, his energy, his joy and love for his friends and family was one in a million. He inspired people every day. My heart breaks every day that he is gone. He should still be here with us, lighting up the room and making this world a better place.

Taylor struggled with an addiction to oxycontin. He fought so hard, and was coming off his longest stretch of sobriety when he had one slip after his dealer wore him down and convinced him to buy again. He took one tablet of oxy, a safe 5mg dose like he had done time and time before. While he chose to purchase that and take that pill, it should not have killed him. Whoever laced and knowingly dealt him that lethal dose of fentanyl marketed as a safe dose of oxy, took his choice away. They killed him. And they remained free to keep selling lethal product with no fear of consequence. Yes, Taylor was an addict, but the stigma of his disease is keeping people from calling his death what it was, a homicide. How can anyone blame the victim of a homicide?

Taylor died 6 days before my interview for the OHSU Physician Assistant program. I am currently finishing my clinical year and will graduate in August and begin working as a medical provider. Currently, I am working at the Hooper Detox and Stabilization center for my behavioral health rotation. I have seen people just like Taylor, hitting rock bottom, and begging for help. Everyone deserves that chance, to access the resources and support they need to take their lives back. Dealers and distributors prey on these sick people, most of whom don't have the support and resources that Taylor had access to. That is wrong. Currently, there is no incentive for dealers to stop selling these dangerous laced drugs that they know are killing people, because they keep getting away with it. If the fear of murdering someone won't stop them, maybe the fear of jail time will. Bartenders are legally prohibited from overserving, prescribers will lose their licenses, face fines and jail time for irresponsible prescribing and diversion. I am not out for revenge. If I had my way, this wouldn't increase arrests or put more dealers behind bars, it would simply deter them from selling these drugs in the first place. This family is trying to use their platform and Taylor's story to save lives and prevent this tragedy from devastating another community.

Nothing is black and white. It took Taylor, becoming a PA, and my experience at Hooper to understand how deep and systemic the cycle of trauma, substance use disorder, poverty, our health care system, criminal justice system, addiction, other social determinants of health contribute to this disease. I don't want to see disadvantaged, mentally ill, and addicted people in jail. That isn't the purpose of this bill. I just want people to have a reason to stop selling the drugs that are killing people, tell Taylor's story to raise awareness and combat the stigma that surrounds mental health disorders and addiction. That stigma prevents people from the services that can save their lives. Taylor should still be here. We need the Taylors of the world. It would be a better place.

Sincerely,

Martie Massey