

Testimony on HB 2089 Revenue committee

Chair Nathanson, Vice Chairs Reschke and Walters

For the record my name is Haven Wheelock and I am writing today to oppose HB 2089.

For over 20 years I have worked in the field of harm reduction which means I work directly with people who are using drugs with the aim of promoting health and safety. The work I have done has never been easy, as overdose HIV HCV and other health consequences along with the stigma associated with drug use have always been part of this work. But I have to say the last few years have gotten so much harder as fentanyl and other novel substances have changed the way people are using drugs. The number of people who are losing their lives to overdose today is nearly 3 times higher than it was in 2019. There are weeks when I am hearing about the deaths of 2 or 3 people in a week.

In all my time doing this work I have never seen the drug supply changing as fast and as constantly as I am seeing right now. It is dizzying to try and keep up with what is emerging in our drug supply and what the health implications of these new substances are. I am truly scared about what is coming over the next few years. I base this statement by looking at the substances that are emerging on the east coast and in parts of Canada

I say all of this to ring home that now is not the time to be considering taking any money out of M110 funding. People are dying, and those of us doing direct service to address this crisis need all of the tools and all of the dollars to save lives. Please do not pull back funding in a time of such great crisis.

Thank you for your time and feel free to reach out to me with questions

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