

April 22, 2025

Senate Committee on Healthcare

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jennifer Kehl. I worked for 20 years as a nurse in the ER, and now work as an acupuncturist in a community clinic. I also provide acupuncture for addiction/recovery in a harm reduction program. I am writing in support of House Bill 2143.

As a nurse working in an ER where a majority of the patient population consisted of those struggling with mental illness, homelessness, and substance abuse, I saw first hand what harm reduction means, and what it can do for those with limited resources.

You may hear many statistics today about the breadth of the addiction and mental health struggles in our country. Those statistics represent people I would see everyday. People like:

- The 32 year old woman struggling with alcoholism whose funeral we had in our chapel.
- The 27 year old young woman who almost had her leg amputated due to damage to vessels in her leg from IV heroin use.
- The man who had so many abscesses from heroin use that my nurse friend told me through tears "I don't even know where to start".
- The young man who swallowed his meth stash while being arrested. He had a fever of 107 and a heart rate of 200 in the ER. He was pronounced dead later that day.
- The 20 year old college student with mental illness and a developing meth addiction whose desperate mother screamed at me through the phone "JUST DO SOMETHING!!!"

With these and countless other images in my mind, I can't see any reason why we shouldn't use every single tool we have in our toolbox. It's imperative that we care for our fellow human beings in whatever way we are able.

Although I am fairly new to the acupuncture profession, I have already seen how regular acupuncture can help with harm reduction. I think about a patient I saw in my internship. He was coming in for neuropathy and blurted out one day "I don't want to drink anymore, it's weird! My family doesn't even believe me, I've been drinking every day for 30 years!" I frequently add the 5 needle protocol to my treatments for those who mention wanting help with smoking cessation, or just wanting to drink less. Even though people may only come in every week or two, they all report at least "cutting down". I hear this a lot: "I just don't think about it as much".

As an acupuncturist, I also use 5 needle protocol every day for those struggling with mental illness and trauma. Besides the immediate calming effects, patients have reported after several

treatments that they are still sad or stressed sometimes, but they don't feel the physical effects in their body as much, and they report recovering much quicker when they are struggling.

This medicine is cheap and effective. It is safe and can be taught easily to non-acupuncturists. This is not about the acupuncture profession or bureaucracy. This is about our responsibility as human beings to care for each other in any way we can.

Thank you for considering my support of House Bill 2143.

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