

To whom it may concern:

In January of 2017 I received a devastating phone call. My handsome, charismatic, bright, athletic, cousin Taylor was gone at 24. I remember it vividly, trying to maintain composure while his aunt filled me in. When I hung up the phone, I fell to my knees and sobbed. Taylor was one of those people who had everything going for him. He had a promising athletic career, a head for business and a smile that lit up a room.

A few years earlier, Taylor had a college football injury. During that time, he became addicted to prescription medication. Taylor wasn't what we think of when we think of an "addict". He didn't use needles or have problems with society or the law. He was the poster child for the "All American Boy". He was the son of a sheriff and an educator. He was part of a loving church community and had a brother and two sisters who adored him and were his best friends. Literally, the ideal family. Again, not what you think when you hear the word "addict". Taylor was part of a much larger extended family who thought the world of that sweet, charismatic boy. Losing him tore a large hole in the family that will never be replaced.

I urge you to support HB 2797. Holding those who sell and/or manufacture illegal drugs responsible when a person dies as a result of their actions just makes sense. In our society, we hold someone responsible for manslaughter when they accidentally kill another person, regardless of intent. If a death results from their actions, they are held accountable. Dealers know they could kill their customers and yet, they continue to sell for their own gain with no regard for the people whose lives they are destroying. I would argue their intent is to harm or kill people. They knowingly sell or manufacture substances that cause harm, addiction and death. They knowingly add substances like fentanyl and other drugs that, even in tiny doses, will kill. They prey on the weakest members of society without regard for life.

Addiction is an illness and like any illness, needs medical and public support. If a dealer supplies a drug to someone that results in their death, they are back out selling death to others in no time. With HB 2797, they would be locked up and those who are desperate for help will have time to recover before the dealers are back on the streets. With luck, a harsher penalty will also deter some dealers and manufacturers from making the choice to deal death.

Nothing can bring Taylor back, but perhaps we can prevent another senseless loss before it's too late.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Kristine Abplanalp