

**PUBLIC HEARING  
HEROIN AND OPIOID ADDICTION TREATMENT AND RECOVERY**

Testimony of Officer Shawn McGee  
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Delaware County, Pennsylvania

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Good afternoon Senator Yaw and members of the board. My name is Shawn McGee. I am a Police Officer with the Ridley Township Police Department in Delaware County PA. I have served with the Ridley Township Police Department since 2007 and prior to that I was an undercover Narcotics Officer for the Clifton Heights Police Department. I am also a member of the Delaware County District Attorney's Office Narcotics team.

As we all know heroin and opiate abuse is a major epidemic in Pennsylvania that has had an enormous negative impact on our communities. As a Patrol Officer, Narcotics Officer, and a member of the community that I work in I have witnessed first-hand the effects of this epidemic.

I have worked with informants and have spoken to individuals that I have grown up with about why they have started using Heroin. Many have told me that they started using heroin after using prescription pills that were prescribed to them after some type of injury and they turned to heroin after they could no longer fill their prescriptions. Some individuals have told me that they had started off abusing prescription medications for recreational use and turned to heroin after they could no longer afford to buy pills on the street, and others have simply said they started using heroin just to try it.

Regardless of why these individuals started using heroin, the end result is always the same; they are addicted and need help.

As a Patrol Officer I have responded to countless overdose calls. When responding to these calls it is a chaotic scene and is usually as a result of a call from a family member discovering that their loved one has overdosed. I have witnessed the look of fear and sadness on family members faces from not knowing if their loved one is going to die or not. This is something that any Police Officer who has responded to an overdose call has witnessed.

Prior to District Attorney Whelan's initiative to place naloxone in all police vehicles in Delaware County there was little I could do when arriving at an overdose call. There's a subject on scene barely breathing and gurgling, sweating profusely, eyes rolled into the back of their head... family members are screaming and crying, pleading me to help their son, daughter, brother or sister. It is one of the worst feelings as Police Officer to arrive at a call for help and not be able to do anything except frantically call on the Police radio for the Medic units to step up their response time and wait.

Thanks to District Attorney Whelan's push to equip all Police vehicles in Delaware County with naloxone, I can help instead of sitting and waiting.

The first time I used naloxone was early one morning in November, 2014. I had just finished roll call at shift change and was reviewing our department memo about naloxone use and speaking to my Lieutenant about how file the paper work with the District Attorney's Office after using it. I received a call on my radio to respond to an overdose call in the Milmont Park section of town. As I arrived on location I retrieved my naloxone kit from my Patrol vehicle, it was the first time I have ever saw the kit.

I entered the residence and was met by a frantic father who had told me had found his son on the couch and he had overdosed on heroin. The patient showed obvious signs of an overdose and was barely breathing. I removed my naloxone kit and began to read the instructions. I was able to quickly assemble the unit and administer one shot of naloxone. The patient was brought down to the ground. The medic units arrive shortly after and provided further treatment. The patient woke up and other than being disoriented and groggy from overdosing he was alert and conscious and speaking with police and medics. The medics advised me that had it not been for the use of the naloxone the patient would have most likely died. I have used naloxone one additional time since and it had very similar results. There is no denying the fact that it does work and can save somebody's life.

I understand that in Law Enforcement there is mixed feelings about the use of naloxone. I understand the moral dilemma that Police Officers have when dealing with overdoses, ask any Police Officer about heroin and the answer will be the same, we hate it. I know how frustrating it is to see someone who just overdosed back out on the street using again and falling back into their destructive habits that ultimately will affect our communities in a bad way.

One argument I often hear is that the person chose to use heroin, and they did that to themselves. My counter argument is this, when Police respond to someone who has attempted to commit suicide and needs help, or when we respond to DUI accident and the person who was driving drunk needs aid, should we also not assist them because they too have also made a destructive decision?

This argument is often met with "yeah but the person that chose to use heroin is going to get treated and then go back to using and stealing to support their habit." Well that may be the case or it may not be. The person who we just treated after a DUI accident could very well go out the next day and drive intoxicated.

All we can do is our jobs do the best of our ability. I learned from day one in the Police Academy that our main goal as Police is to protect life and property. We have to respond to each call as it comes in and act accordingly and professionally. People look up to men and woman in uniform to be their pillars of strength during times of crisis. We have to hide our fears and emotions and provide the service and protection to our residents that we swore to uphold.