

To: Mike Fink
From: Dr. Richard F. Dunlap Jr., Superintendent of the Upper Darby School District
Date: 10 OCT 13
Subject: Testimony for the House Judiciary Committee Public Hearing on Thursday, October 24, 2013

I am speaking as a school official and as a parent who lost his son to a drug overdose. My son lost his life by ingesting a lethal cocktail that was a combination of prescription drugs and alcohol. He lost his life, at the age of 19, four years ago this past September 6th. My son's death prevented him from becoming hooked on the drug, heroine, for which this public hearing is all about. I am quoting some statistics from different sources, the Center for Disease Control, the United States Department of Health and Human Services, and The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) 2013 world overview

In 2008, around 12,000 people lost their lives to an overdose involving painkillers. That number has tripled from 1990 to 2008. Statisticians are forecasting that in the year 2013 that number will be close to 30,000. The reason I mention painkillers is because they are the evolution, predecessor, or so-called drug of choice for many users who then move on to heroin. Last year it was reported that 81,000 people made trips to the emergency room for heroin related overdoses. Last year, 4,125 people overdosed and died from the result of a heroin overdose in the United States. One of the most significant effects of heroin use is addiction. With regular heroin use tolerance to the drug develops. Once this happens the abuser must use more heroin to achieve the same intensity. As higher doses of the drug are used over time physical dependence and addiction to the drug develop. Heroin does not discriminate. It is in our wealthiest communities. It is in our poorest communities and every place in between. It is in all our schools. And although it seems to be destroying a whole lot of our young folks, it does not discriminate by age. As a former high school principal and as a superintendent, I have dealt with school related situations involving heroin.

The reason we have a problem on our hands is also worth repeating. Heroin is cheaper. It is easier to use and readily available. It is also one of the most addictive substances on the face of the earth. Combine all the above, and we have a very perfect, very deadly storm. I say we because this is our entire problem. It is not just a problem to be handled singularly by law enforcement, the government or government agencies, our medical industry, our schools, or our social services. This pandemic affects all aspects of our society: especially, families. Globally, between 102,000 and 247,000 people died from drug overdoses in 2011. One of the best things that we can do is to educate, radically educate, our entire society of how this disease of heroin addiction affects all of us. It affects all of us beyond our emotional and social feelings; this disease hits all of us in the pocketbook. It destroys people's lives beyond the lost of a loved one. The injustice of treatment options available to people differ based upon their insurance capabilities or their wealth.

We need to increase access to substance abuse treatment. Improve prescription drug monitoring programs, which are electronic databases that track all prescriptions for opioids in the state. Use prescription drug monitoring programs, public insurance programs, and workers' compensation data to identify improper prescribing of opioids. Set up programs for public insurance programs, workers' compensation programs, and state-run health plans that identify and address improper patient use of opioids.

Passing, enforcing and evaluating pill mill, doctor shopping and other state laws to reduce prescription opioid abuse. Force state licensing boards to take action against inappropriate prescribing.

Rick and Helen Dunlap, along with DEA agents from the Philadelphia office, members of their family, and Tim's friends, provide parents and students with information on why they should say "No" when tempted by drugs and alcohol. They give students information on how to navigate the difficult decisions they face as young adults. They convey this message by sharing their family's difficult journey through their son's drug addiction. They cover the disease process, circumnavigating the insurance world and rehab, and Tim's tragic story. While telling Tim's story, the focus of their program is about giving the students information on how to make difficult decisions by doing what is right for themselves, their families, and their friends.

The night before they speak with the students, they meet with the parents of the school. The DEA runs the lion share of this meeting by providing parents with current information about the use of drugs, types of drugs, and current practices of drug abuse in our geographic area. They also provide parents with information on the "hidden signs" of drug abuse and what they train their field agents to look for in drug abuse cases. A short video is shown that provides parents with the current mission of the Drug Enforcement Agency. The Dunlap's share Tim's Story with the parents and they break up this presentation to show what they are going to cover with the students the next day.

The day of the student presentation to the student body, the Dunlap's share Tim's story. While they share Tim's story they incorporate the history of drug abuse in our society, the rehab process, insurance, family decisions, and the tragedy of Tim's overdose. The entire focus of a Tim's Talk is about making the correct decision for yourself, your family and those who love and care for you, as well as making the right decision for your peers. The talk also focuses on skills to use in dealing with peers about this difficult subject. Following the presentation many family members and friends of Tim are available for individual students to speak with.