

I want to thank this Committee for addressing this serious issue, this most serious of issues. Generally, when speaking to an audience like this I would address supply, demand and harm reduction strategies. Knowing the expertise of the other panel members today I will focus my comments on demand and touch on harm reduction. In the midst of an opioid epidemic I want to see people find access to treatment to save lives, while preventing the next generation from starting down this path. We must do both simultaneously.

The context for my comments today come from 10 years as a classroom teacher, behavioral health education, 20 years in non-profit prevention, previous Director for Governor Ducey's Office of Youth, Faith and Family and someone who's been in the trenches with her own family and thousands of other families for 20 years with addiction.

About a decade before we started notMYkid, drug abuse was the number one issue on the minds of Americans. This country went to work and we made huge strides—in and from all sectors. Yes, it was law enforcement, but it was also everyone else, too—from schools to churches to synagogues to Hollywood to professional sports. This country knows how to take an issue, like we've done with tobacco use, seriously when it wants to and in the late 1980s and early 1990s we did.

The results were nearly miraculous. We reduced drug abuse in this county by over 50 percent by 1993. And then we did in this country what we too often do: we moved on. We should look back to those years and use those successful strategies. We've done this before, we can do this again. We must first have the will and focus to grind these strategies out, year after year without fail. This should be one of our most diligent efforts and focused priorities as a nation. Too often I hear smart, responsible citizens say that it's impossible to turn America's drug use around and I say, you're wrong! The mass poisoning of millions can be stopped with a serious effort. Anyone who actually believes that we can't do this is part of the problem, not the solution.

We have addressed drug crisis before including crack cocaine, crystal meth and now must employ similar strategies to the latest epidemic, opioids. We actually know what to do as we've been here before. Every single American has a role to be played in reducing substance use. Yes, I said substance use vs. singling out opioids. America has a drug USE problem. Of course we see use trends spike as different drugs make it across our borders, through our US postal service and onto our streets. And yes we must specifically address the opioid epidemic with urgency, but we must also begin to see the pattern. Both what comes across our borders and what is produced here, be it spice, molly, bath salts and more, are what citizens will use. In short, we have a USE problem in the United States. Addressing demand or use on-going of ALL substances must be consistent and evidenced based year after year.

Let's first take a look at some successful prevention strategies employed here in Arizona, but with intermittent or no continued funding sources to continue annually. We must prevent future generations from following the path of drug use and abuse.

The Arizona Youth Survey 2016 tells us that youth use drugs to have fun, feel good, deal with stress and avoid being sad. In other words, youth want to alter how they feel through a drug, and adults have sent them that message in so many ways. We've told kids things like marijuana is

medicine when we vote to change medicine so we can recreate with it, we see commercials every time we turn on the TV that tell us there's a fix for every feeling we have just ask your doctor for this pill. But the survey also gives us a roadmap for how to keep them from using drugs. The top reasons why kids don't use drugs are: it's of no interest in them, they understand the harmful effects, they don't want to disappoint their parents and they're illegal. All points of data that we can implement like the campaign we started here in the state of Arizona. Instead of the "Just Say No" campaign Arizona has created a just say yes campaign. Say yes to "I've Got Something Better To Do". Connecting youth to local opportunities to play sports, hike the mountains, listen to a concert or volunteer connects them to their passions, dreams and families. When people in our country shame, stigmatize and don't want to spend money to help those with a chronic, relapsing, brain disease, I often think, do they not remember that the average age of first use in this country is 13. We're talking about helping people who began their drug use as a teenager. Funding for this campaign is intermittent at best and must be sustained year round for maximum impact.

We all know that talking regularly with an educated parent about substance abuse can reduce drug use by about 50%. Yet, the Arizona Youth Survey shows us that 50% of AZ 8<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents didn't talk about drugs in the last year and almost 60% of seniors didn't hear from their parents either. Fix that, focus on that, mandatory parent, youth and faculty involvement in drug education like the program we launched in Arizona, Healthy Families Healthy Youth, prevention programming that educates youth, parents and faculty at the same time. These are researched based and have great data to support the effectiveness of this program, but as is the norm, there will be no money to continue this cost effective, data driven prevention program next year.

#### SBIRT-Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral to Treatment

Yes, screen ALL high school students for mental health and substance use. 90% of all addiction start in the teen years. Screen youth during these years to support and intervene early when it's easiest to turn the situation around, when its least "costly" to our youth and society. When we screen all youth in a school setting no one gets singled out, no one is weird, like vision screening use to be: it's preventative and helpful to connect youth and their families to resources. One such intervention program at notMYkid has tripled in size rapidly through school referrals, Project Rewind. When a kid is first caught with a substance we need to intervene to stop its progression vs. kicking them out of school. As we look at our schools across the country, I don't think anyone can deny that it's about schools, prevention, early diagnosis and connecting kids to resources. As we look back at all the school violence, someone or multiple someones knew there was a problem with the school shooters. We need to change school culture and create meaningful prevention programs with access to resources early. Youth feel loved and protected when adults set boundaries and offer support. Today's youth feel alone, isolated and stressed more than ever. This is a place for adults to get educated and connect to our youth facilitated in school settings.

As we moved on from the early 1990s, the crisis came back and today we are at epidemic portions with over 64,000 Americans dying a year from drug overdoses. Every year now, we lose more people to drug overdose deaths than all the names gathered over 18 years on the Vietnam Memorial Wall. In D.C.

That, of course, is the worst of it—we haven't even begun to account for family breakup, social services being stretched, criminal activity and costs, workplace accidents, dropouts and education deficits, ER admissions, lost productivity. Once we do—we're talking hundreds of billions of dollars to America on this one problem, this one problem that drives so many other problems. Please let me be clear, although I have written my share of checks to organizations to help someone get off the streets, find a treatment bed or pay for a meal, I'd much prefer to invest in a system of prevention which offers the greatest rewards to the individual and society.

To those of us who know friends and family in rehab we know two things: 1) Those are the lucky ones, the fortunate ones. Most don't get to or find rehab. Approximately 23 million people need treatment for a substance use disorder annually, yet sadly, only about 10% will receive it. 2) Sobriety is a life-long commitment that is addressed every day. Recovery is not linear, but relapse does not have to be a part of a person's story. Relapse is all-too-common and I don't accept that norm. I have lived through this personally with a son and a sister. Fortunately my son is with me, but my sister is not.

I have spent, as do others, tens of thousands of dollars on detox and treatment just to see my investment of love and resources lost with a relapse. The scariest day of a recovering addict's life is the day they leave the treatment center. We literally have built and funded a system for decades that hasn't changed and worse yet, rewards failure by bad actors. To be clear, there are many wonderful treatment centers and even more trained and compassionate counselors who want to help people. But I fear, and my experience has been, that there are far too many in this field who prey upon individuals and families at one of their most vulnerable times in life. Most business models would be rewarded for success and innovation in their fields, but we financially reward those in this field more when they have terrible outcomes or no outcomes at all! Let's hold treatment centers accountable for verifiable outcomes. I know you're thinking that's impossible, but I assure you it is not. Through technology assisted care, peer support programs, drug testing and more we can and must know which treatment centers are doing the best job and reward them. This type of programming actually already exists. In all candor, I share with you the only technology that does all of this today, that I am aware of, which was created by my son Steve who is here with me today. That program is called True After Care. There are likely others in the field who do something similar and I want to know more about them as well. The bottom line is, let's fund what works and demand verifiable outcomes! Recovery needs to be a part of treatment. No one should leave a 30 day treatment program without a serious support system like True After Care to complete their journey into long term sobriety.

So in conclusion I want you to remember five things; 1) Prevention is the healthiest and most affordable choice we can ever make decreasing demand for drugs 2) The Federal government must provide visible leadership to create and convene all Americans in this effort 3) We must recognize behavioral health as equally important as getting an education and imbed programs into our schools. 4) We need on-going public and private sector commitments 5) Lastly, we must make access to treatment widely available

Drugs will always be here, so our message of prevention must be the louder of the two. We've done this before, we can and must do this again as it is not an unknown science.

