

Feb 28 at 3:47 PM

My name is Reverend Sarah Siegel and I am in support of H.162 that removes buprenorphine from the misdemeanor crime of possession of a narcotic.

I have over 11 years clean from heroin and other drugs. I have three children and am an Ordained Interfaith Minister.

My road to recovery was long and winding. It took many failed attempts at sobriety before I was finally able to achieve lasting recovery, and I spent a handful of years on suboxone and methadone, at different times. Both of these medicines had a place, because they kept me alive until I could ultimately address the root causes and work the 12 Steps of AA to find lasting recovery. I am convinced that I would have died without these two medicines.

The state of affairs with the opioid epidemic requires us to think outside the box. We have spent long enough trying to arrest our way out of this tragic state of affairs and meanwhile, the problem has only gotten worse.

To me, the choice to use buprenorphine- prescribed or not- is a choice NOT to use fentanyl laced heroin, and therefore is a choice to live. We need to support every single effort that those suffering from Substance use disorder make to change their lives and to heal. We must support them in every effort we possibly can when they are choosing life.

I am not only intimately familiar with recovering from substance use disorder from my own personal experience, but I know how it feels to lose someone close to this illness. I lost my nephew last March to a heroin overdose. Some of the highest quality recovery he had was when he was on buprenorphine. During those years, he held down a job and really healed some.

We need all the options on the table and we simply can not afford to arrest and punish our way out of the problem. We need to make the compassionate choice, and instead of seeing people who are using as law breakers and deviants, we need to see them as humans who have mothers, fathers and children. Humans who are greatly suffering from a severe malady. Humans who need chances and support to heal.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this very important issue.

With much gratitude,
Rev. Sarah Siegel