

Dear Mr. President:

First and foremost, congratulations on your second term. I am a federal court reporter in Philadelphia and owner of Kaplan, Leaman & Wolfe Court Reporting & Litigation Support. I lost my first-born son, Justin, on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012. Months previously, Justin confronted his mother admitting that he was addicted to Percocet and Oxycontin, for which she took him to our family physician. At that time, our physician was directed by Justin not to apprise me, as my son told him that my knowledge of such would "kill me."

At that time, our physician told his mother to take him immediately to a crisis center for treatment; however, Justin convinced her, without the doctor's knowledge, that she take him to a suboxone doctor he personally found. Subsequently, two months later, when I was informed regarding his addiction, I demanded that he must go into an in-patient rehab, for which he replied that since he was 21 years old, he can make his own decision. He did not want to enter into an in-patient rehab because he stated he did not want to be exposed to worse drugs such as heroin and crack cocaine. However, unbeknownst to our family, he had been using heroin, based on his own admission to the doctors, for quite some time. He, therefore, went to an out-patient rehab, as well as began weekly psychiatric visits.

His out-patient rehab was for the month of August. In September, he attended Temple University, and continued with his psychiatric visits until his passing in December. Throughout this time, Justin was friends with a student attending a pharmacy school who had been in and out of in-patient rehabs, a local judge's son who worked for Governor Christie who also had been in and out of in-patient rehabs, and an attorney's son who had been in and out of rehab, as well. This demonstrates that these drugs do not discriminate as a result of background or one's economic situation.

Upon Justin's passing, it was discovered that he died from a heroin overdose, which was a total surprise to everyone in our family. Upon doing an investigation, I not only learned many surprising details which are too numerous to put in this e-mail, but the fact that heroin addiction has been rampant in our society, killing our children and destroying the lives of their families. We are a society which needs to advance education in the schools throughout every grade regarding the dangers of the use of opiate drugs, as they have not only become rampant, but, once addicted, the success rate of recovery is extremely slim.

During part of my investigation, I was apprised that a DEA agent, with over 25 years of experience in the field, learned that his daughter was addicted to Percocet, Oxycontin and then heroin before he managed to place her into two in-patient rehabs with some success FOR NOW. No one seems to speak about their child's addiction due to embarrassment or shame. However, within the past two months since my son's passing, I have spoken to well over 25 parents who have come forward with the same or similar story as mine. That is, several stints of rehab, eventually only to lose their child to an overdose from this killer drug, many of whom could no longer afford the costs of healthcare, as their insurance would pay for a limited duration of rehabilitation.

I am cognizant that you have much to contend with regarding the economy, our immigration, the budget deadline, the gun laws, and international concerns. However, if our children, who are our future leaders, are dying of these horribly addictive diseases, then there will be no viable country in the future. Justin was an extremely intelligent young man, as were his friends who have admitted to using drugs, all with bright futures ahead of them.

Although my son's life has been cut short, I am confident that given the opportunity to speak before Congress to implement a law or amendment with respect to parents being informed under the HIPAA regulations of their child's drug addiction or mental disease, as well as insurance companies providing for long-term care for addiction, I can bring hope and success to other families with the same disease.

Let me emphasize, my son admitted to his suboxone doctor, as well as our family physician, both out of the presence of his mother, without our knowledge, that he had been using heroin for 11 months prior to going to the doctor. Please remember that Justin informed his mother that he was using Percocet and Oxycontin. If we had been apprised that he was using heroin, the outcome would have been very different, indeed, as outpatient rehab would not have been an option. Education in the schools is mandatory at every level, to be instilled within a child's mind from the beginning regarding the dangers of the drug and what the fatal, ultimate outcome will be if one ever starts to consume opiates.

I implore you, Mr. President, as a grieving father, to allow me to address the issues of the HIPAA law regarding "legally emancipated minors" who have a documented drug history or mental disorder, especially those who maintain legal residency in the parents' home. Although we are able to have health insurance coverage for our children up to age 26, the medical records are protected from their parents unless the patient gives explicit permission. Therefore, I am requesting an opportunity to present my ideas before a panel of legislators, to not only save millions of lives in the future, but to take an active stand regarding the so-called monkey on one's back that cannot be unleashed.

In closing, as I am sure you are aware, this has had, and can have, a profound and devastating effect on all levels of socioeconomic families. When you look at all of the famous, intelligent people whose lives were taken by heroin, this country has lost a wealth of talent and success which would have been an asset to the growth and strength of our nation.

It is with sincere appreciation that I thank you and look forward to your positive response. May I also thank you for all of your hard work, and wish you and your administration much success, Mr. President.

Sincerely,

Gregg B. Wolfe  
Voorhees, New Jersey

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