

Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Cameron Lapine 271-2104

HB 1318, relative to the duties of the opioid abatement advisory commission.

Hearing Date: March 27, 2024

Time Opened: 9:40 a.m.

Time Closed: 10:00 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Birdsell, Avard, Bradley, Whitley and Prentiss

Members of the Committee Absent: None

Bill Analysis: This bill defines integrated pain management and adds duties to the New Hampshire opioid abatement advisory commission involving support for pain management services.

Sponsors:

Rep. Nagel

Rep. Roy

Rep. Lundgren

Who supports the bill: Lara McIntyre (Granite State Home Health & Hospice Association), Rep. David Nagel (Belknap – District 6), Daniel Richardson, and Janet Lucas.

Who opposes the bill: None.

Who is neutral on the bill: None.

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Representative David Nagel

Belknap – District 6

- Representative Nagel said that 66 million Americans suffer from chronic pain, 1.5 million are in hospice or receive palliative care, and 50 million undergo surgery each year.
- Rep. Nagel said his goal in life is to create public policy that balances caring for people in pain with people in addiction. The opioid crisis swung the pendulum in one direction.
- Rep. Nagel said the Opioid Abatement Fund has redistributed billions of dollars from people in pain to people with addiction.
- Rep. Nagel said surveys show 85% of people feel that their care has been compromised due to pressure on providers not to treat pain with prescriptions.
- Rep. Nagel discussed the death by suicide of Doug Hale, who took his own life after suffering with chronic pain for decades and being sent to a six-day detox program after his provider ceased prescribing him methadone for pain.
- Rep. Nagel said HB 1318 proposes that the Opioid Abatement Fund can be used to help people adversely affected by the response to the opioid crisis.

- Rep. Nagel said anyone who received money from an opioid producer was threatened with legal action if they prescribed an opioid to someone in pain. Many organizations active in pain management went bankrupt due to these legal costs.
- Rep. Nagel said the related federal regulations allow the usage of opioid settlement funds as outlined in HB 1318. Lines 14 through 18 create novel programs to address opioid refugees. He said opioid refugees are people who were well cared for but then abandoned by the sudden shift away from pain management. He said, historically, 40% of the people who received care at methadone clinics were doing so for chronic pain treatment. Today they cannot do so at all.
- Rep. Nagel said Lines 19 through 21 develop an integrated model of care for managing pain.
- Rep. Nagel said HB 1318 is evidence-based and passed the House with unanimous support.
- Senator Prentiss discussed her work as a deputy medical examiner. She shared the story of a man she investigated who died by overdose after his prescription medication for pain was no longer being prescribed to him so he sought out medication on the street.
 - Rep. Nagel said that he hears stories like that every day.
- Senator Birdsell asked who was pressuring Mr. Hale's provider to take him off of his medication.
 - Rep. Nagel said the larger medical center that his provider worked for pressured the providers to move away from prescribing opioids for pain. He said Mr. Hale's record was not perfectly clean but there was not enough to warrant cutting him off and going through a six-day detox program.
- Senator Bradley said that pain killers were over-prescribed. He said that the lawyers writing policies for doctors about prescriptions was also an overreaction. He asked if Rep. Nagel thought that the legal status of allowing expert physicians who manage pain had been brought back into balance since the peak of the opioid crisis.
 - Rep. Nagel said he did not believe the system was in balance at all.
- Sen. Bradley asked if there was an opportunity to do more than was being proposed in HB 1318.
 - Rep. Nagel agreed. He said he was trying to deal with the remnants of a public policy disaster that ostracized an entire group of people. He said that it is a travesty that the medical system promotes pills and procedures but not access to alternative treatments like acupuncture.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition: None.

Neutral Information Presented: None.