

Dear State Publicly Elected Official,

I am writing you today because you are my representation in the state legislature and I want to share my support for a proposed bill.

The bill I want you to support on my behalf is titled "The Jennifer Act" and was proposed in 2009 and 2010 for the state of Indiana, but has not yet passed.

The Synopsis of The Jennifer Act

The purpose of The Jennifer Act is to assist drug and alcohol addicted individuals in receiving treatment (detox and rehabilitation) from the state of Indiana. "The Jennifer Act" has been designed to allow family members of the addicted individual to file a petition with the state explaining how their loved one is on a downward spiral into the depths of drug or alcohol addiction. Ultimately without state ordered rehab, many addicts are unable to turn their life around and will die and in the process will wreak havoc on their family, the community, and the tax payers. This is happening at an alarming rate - the White House is calling this an epidemic. The goal is to help save the addict's life and give them another shot at being a productive, well-adjusted citizen again. For themselves and their family's.

Why is this important?

The myth is that drug addicts are only indigent people who live on the street corner and hold out signs begging for money. And although this can be a byproduct of drug and alcohol addiction, many addicts in today's society start out as young people with goals, hopes and dreams just like you and I. Many of today's addicts are between the ages 18-25 who grew up in well-adjusted families, earned good grades in school, played sports and were overall considered 'normal kids' by most standards. Many addicts are college students who get hooked on drugs after trying it once or twice. Some addicts are people who experience an injury and get prescribed pain medication only to become addicted to the pills. These addicts are our sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives. **It can happen to anyone in any walk of life** - no matter their age, race, gender or standard of living. Just ask around, you are sure to come across someone who is struggling with addiction. Drug and alcohol abuse is considered to be at epidemic levels in our country. Many will ultimately perish in their battle to get sober.

How The Jennifer Act Will be Effective

"The Jennifer Act" will provide a multi-stage approach to resolving the drug epidemic in Indiana.

First, it is designed to allow a family to intervene on behalf of an addicted family member. The family is the first line of defense to save an addicts life and they are instrumental for the rehabilitation process to work. When a family member sees their loved one addicted to drugs or alcohol, they can file a petition to get that individual picked up by law enforcement.

Secondly, the addict will then be taken under custody of the state and will be required to see a judge. Once the judge determines this person is, in fact, an addict and requires drug treatment, the addict will be required to undergo a detox/rehabilitation program.

Thirdly, the addicted person will be assessed and will undergo the drug treatment program with the desired result of salvaging that person's life.

Financial Impact

The main criticism of "The Jennifer Act" is the financial impact it would have on the State. There will undoubtedly be costs to pickup addicts off the streets, hold them temporarily in jail, bring them in front of a judge and ultimately put them through a state-ordered rehab program. I share the same concern as many of you in the State Legislature and with our fellow citizens and believe we need to make this bill financially sustainable with as little government spending as possible. I think the facts below will explain how The Jennifer Act can actually save the State money every year.

The truth is: addicts *already* exist in our State and they *already* drain the State of resources. Think of how many crimes are committed due to substance problems each and every year - theft, fraud, burglary, assault, battery, driving under the influence...and the list goes on. Not to mention the actual crimes of possessing, selling, distributing or manufacturing drugs. Think of how many people are arrested each year for all of these drug related incidences. Think of every time one of these addicts get arrested, held in jail, and put in front of a judge. **This cost is enormous.** Not to mention the detriment they have caused for their family members or society. Now imagine that this individual gets picked up under "The Jennifer Act" before they commit a crime, before they drive under the influence and crash into oncoming traffic, before they assault a family member or child, before they burn every bridge in their life. Their life can be intervened upon by the people who know them best, their own family. The addict can be picked up and assessed by a professional and moved into a drug treatment facility which attacks the root problem: addiction. This simple action can bypass so much pain and crime in our State and get the individual back on track where they need to be.

It saves the state roughly \$14,699 a year to put someone in state ordered rehab as opposed to jail or prison¹. During 2010 in Indiana there were 6,947 drug arrests². So very simply put, the state stands to save a substantial amount of money by putting individuals into rehab versus jail or prison.

*If every single person arrested on drug charges in Indiana in 2010 was put in rehab instead of jail or prison, **the state would have saved roughly \$102,000,000.***

And sure, not every single person arrested on drug charges would qualify for, or benefit from rehab, but even a fraction of that number would still net the state of Indiana some substantial savings. And these savings would have a ripple effect on the entire system - both financially and socially. People could see that there is hope for themselves or loved ones. Valuable tax dollars could be saved and used in other areas of our State. And lives will literally be saved everyday.

Effectiveness

About 65% of individuals who complete a one year faith-based drug treatment program remain sober *and* without arrests for at least 3 years after completing the program. The number rises to 85% if the individual stays with the program another year to help newcomers. Also, a recent Rand study has shown that every \$1 spent on treatment has \$7 worth of societal benefits. These benefits are reflective in reduced crime, higher productivity, lower unemployment, decreased mental illness and decreased public aid³.

As you can now clearly see, not only will "The Jennifer Act" save many lives - lives that are extremely important and in jeopardy - but it also has the potential to save the state millions of dollars annually.

I feel very strongly about this bill "The Jennifer Act" and I want you to support in the upcoming legislative season on my behalf. Visit www.thejenniferact.com for more information.

Sincerely,

¹Indiana Department of Correction Fact Card 2011 and data gathered from drug rehab centers across Indiana.

²Indiana Department of Correction Fact Card 2011.

³RAND Corporation; Office of Media relations: December 7, 2006