



MIKE DEWINE

★ OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL ★

August 29, 2014

The Honorable Jim Butler
Ohio House of Representatives
77 S. High Street, 13th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Representative Butler:

I am writing to express my support for House Bill 508, legislation to expand the offense of murder if the result of selling a controlled substance leads to death caused by overdose.

Death by drug overdose is growing at a crippling rate in our state. From urban to rural areas, no community is immune to the drug abuse's devastation. Though all the numbers are not in yet, projects suggest that nearly 1000 Ohioans died as a direct result of a heroin overdose. With full knowledge of the devastation they are causing, drug dealers are responsible for the spread of these drugs and ultimately the impact they have on our communities, families, and children. While there are laws to hold drug peddlers responsible for drug trafficking, the code is silent on liability for deaths caused by overdose. Whether the person who overdoses is a first-time drug user or an addict, the dealer knows the potential consequence of death each time drugs are sold. As we continue to fight the drug epidemic on a variety of fronts throughout Ohio, the ability to hold drug dealers accountable for overdose deaths would serve as a significant tool for law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges.

By expanding the definition of murder to include individuals who proximately cause overdose death through drug trafficking and creating enhanced penalties for these acts, this bill would provide a much-needed criminal deterrent, as well as accountability for the drug dealer's role in Ohio overdose deaths. I strongly support House Bill 508 and encourage the Ohio General Assembly to enact this important piece of legislation.

Very respectfully yours,

Mike DeWine
Ohio Attorney General