



**Testimony at Illinois Senate Insurance Committee Meeting
February 18, 2025**

Good afternoon. Thank you, Chair Morrison, Vice Chair Fine, and other members of this distinguished committee, for holding today's hearing, which includes consideration of a bill that, in my opinion, would go a long way towards preventing opioid addiction in Illinois.

My name is Sterling Elliott and I am a member of the Board of Directors for Voices for Non-Opioid Choices – or “Voices” for short. Voices is a national, non-partisan coalition dedicated advancing thoughtful policy measures designed to prevent opioid addiction.

Voices represents more than 200 leading clinical, patient, and public health organizations and tens of thousands of advocates who have all banded together under this shared mission. On behalf of Voices, I am here today to speak in support of S. 1238 and it is my hope that your committee will quickly advance this important legislation.

In addition to being a Board member for Voices for Non-Opioid Choices, I am a clinical pharmacist specializing in the use of medications related to surgery, with an emphasis on pharmacy-related care in orthopedic procedures. My clinical, research, and teaching interests lie in the space of management of post-operative pain, focusing on providing patients with pragmatic strategies for managing pain safely while minimizing an emphasis on opioids. In this regard, I hold a teaching position at the Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern University.

As you are aware, Illinois is not immune to the opioid crisis. In 2023, there were nearly three thousand opioid-related overdose deaths in the state, representing 85 percent of all drug overdose deaths in the state.

Nationwide, we lose more than 220 Americans every day to an opioid-related drug overdose. This represents a 70 percent increase since just 2019.

I know well a path to opioid addiction that, for some, can start after being prescribed an opioid to manage postsurgical pain. Today, in Illinois and around the country, 90 percent of surgery patients receive opioids to manage their pain – whether they need them or not. In Illinois, there were 35.2 opioid prescriptions written for every 100 persons in 2023. All told, there are nearly 4 million Americans who become newly persistent opioid users every year after being prescribed an opioid for postsurgical pain.

For some, this can have devastating consequences up to and including overdose death.

Fortunately, this is a path to addiction that can be prevented by improving the way that we treat acute pain in this country, reducing our overreliance on prescription opioids, and ensuring widespread access to non-opioid approaches.

S. 1238 would help accomplish all of these goals and would ensure that those in Illinois can easily access FDA-approved non-opioid pain management treatments. This legislation would make sure that insurance practices do not simply steer patients towards lowest cost pain treatment options which, as a pharmacist, I know are generic prescription opioids.

The legislation makes sure that patients and providers can readily and easily access non-addictive approaches just as easily as they can obtain any other generic medication. In the process, it puts choice in pain care where it belongs – with the patients and their healthcare providers – not with insurance companies.

Voices applauds the advancements proposed in S. 1238 and would like to see these efforts come to fruition.

Once again, thank you for making the time today to recognize and examine the importance of expanding access to non-addictive opioid alternatives throughout Illinois.

I urge the committee to take action to prevent opioid addiction before it starts and save lives. This starts by moving S. 1238 forward.

Thank you.