

Sarah McDermott
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My name is Sarah McDermott and I have helped put together a story for a woman so she may share her brother's tragic story directly related to why we are asking for support with this proposed legislation.

Thank you in advance for your time.

Edward Estes II's Story

Edward Estes II was my oldest brother. He was born in Portland Maine on June 19, 1991. He was the one my siblings and I all looked up to throughout our childhood. We lived in Standish when we were young. When Eddie was just a young teen, he was taken and placed in a group home because he had started getting into trouble. My mom, my other brother and I only got to see him as often as the group home permitted.

When Eddie was in high school he was on the football team as well as the wrestling team. He had friends and a great personality. He was always smiling. Eddie dropped out of high school his last year but later got his GED in jail.

He moved back down to where my mom and I had been living. I remember how excited I was to see him. I can't really remember when his battle with addiction started, I just recall him struggling for as long as I can remember. He would go to parties and I got to meet all his friends who became like siblings to my other brother and myself. They were all always at my house whenever Eddie came to visit.

Over time Eddie started to get into more trouble and started hanging out with friends that were getting high. He was in and out of jail multiple times, one time in particular for heroin possession. Other times for things like stealing related to his addiction.

The time he was arrested for heroin possession, it felt like he was in jail for so long. He was incarcerated for 2 years. When he got out he was healthy and happy. It was only a couple of months before he had relapsed and back in the same cycle.

The last 2 years were hard on everyone. When he couldn't get his fix, we would watch him go through awful withdrawals. We hated to see him hurting but we didn't want to enable him either.

Last summer he hit bottom. He spent most of his nights on the street, passing out high in hallways of apartments and was doing anything possible to obtain drugs. He would cry and say he wanted help. He didn't know where to turn. He didn't have insurance so getting any kind of medicated assisted treatment was next to impossible especially without money and a place to live. With all of his struggles, gaining and maintaining employment was impossible. This led to him being without food and spending most nights on the streets. For a while he would ask for \$20 and say it was for food. Eventually we realized what it was for and we bought him food instead.

He would break down in the car when I would drive him to different places to spend the night because due to his issues he could not stay with me. It was so hard to leave him like this. He was my big brother and it felt like I was abandoning him.

6 months ago Eddie was arrested for breaking into cars and did not receive ANY TREATMENT while incarcerated in the York County Jail. He went through everything ALONE. He did not get medication or counseling. He did not get the help he so desperately needed and wanted. The inmates participated in a hunger strike to fight back against the injustice of it all. He was so proud to be a part of something that fought for people like him.

On April 13, 2021 My brother was released from York County Jail with ZERO resources, medication, or treatment options. He went to spend the night at a friend's house. I couldn't wait to see him in the following days. Less than 24 hours after his release, my brother was dead. 2 months before his 30th birthday. Leaving behind so many friends and family members who loved him more than anything.

To you, an addict may only be a troubled person but to us they are so much more. They are our brothers, our sisters, our cousins and our mother and fathers. They matter. They are people too. WE NEED TO DO BETTER. A part of me will always wonder if we could've done more. If there had been more resources in jail or otherwise, would Eddie still be here? Now his family and friends will never be able to see his smile or feel one of his bear hugs. It's only been 7 days. And I really miss my brother.

Sincerely,
A grieving sister

Kara Williams