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## Editorial: Many work hard in opiate fight

Our view: Funds needed for drug battle

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Early last week, U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, stepped up to announce he's co-sponsoring a bill that targets the battle against heroin.

His bill would increase ease limits on anti-addiction medication, thereby helping countless more addicts break their habit.

The limits on the medication now put at 30 the number of patients in their first year of treatment that a doctor can care for with anti-addiction medicines such as Suboxone. After the first year, the limit is 100 patients.

Brown's legislation would move the first year limit to 100 and allow unlimited treatment for those beyond that first year. It also would allow physicians assistants and nurse practitioners to dispense these drugs.

Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, also has been pushing legislation, called the Comprehensive Addiction Recovery Act, that would provide more funds for treatment and recovery for addicts.

News of these actions must have sounded like an angelic chorus to Stark County Common Pleas Court Judge Frank G. Forchione.

The titan in the local battle against the heroin scourge made a passionate plea to those in attendance Thursday at the Stop Heroin From Killing Symposium at Malone University. He cited the lack of attention to the problem at the state and federal levels.

*"I invited a lot of public officials tonight, and you see a lot of them here, because they really care about this community. We need more beds to have more treatment, there's no question about it. We invited our representatives from Ohio that aren't here. But I talked earlier tonight about 15 minutes can save a life, and I asked everybody to talk to somebody 15 minutes. Maybe take 15 minutes to write a letter to your congressman, your senator, and tell them we need more beds."*

More funding for more treatment beds would allow quicker access to the tools available for addicts in Stark County. And there are a lot of them.

Check out the website for the Mental Health and Addiction Services Board of Stark County. The opiate prevention toolkit discusses how teachers can speak to students and parents can address their children about this massive problem plaguing America. The Crisis Hotline at 330-452-6000 is available in times of emergency.

As helpful as any of these tools, funding is the answer to the immediate problem of how to care for those in the throes of the disease of addiction.

And Forchione said he's not giving up.

*"Believe it or not, I'm the craziest person in America. I wrote a letter to every presidential candidate to come here tonight. I'm not lying to you ... Ben Carson's staff actually got hold of me and said they're in another state ... But, I want somebody to come here, I'm tired of watching these candidates just calling each other names. I don't know why somebody isn't going to address this heroin, but I'm going to keep writing letters and so before we get to this presidential election, we can get somebody with some ideas, because there's been a couple bills in the Senate and Congress, that they say they're gonna give all these millions and billions of dollars. And they don't say what it's going to do. But, like you said, we need beds. When we get somebody, we need to get them in there right away."*

With people like Forchione, and the dedicated soldiers in the Opiate Task Force, and the fine folks battling daily to care for those addicted to these deadly drugs, it's easy to see our community is in good hands in this desperate fight for life.

We encourage them to keep up this important, difficult work.

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