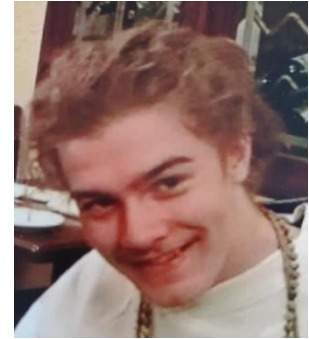


January 29, 2025

Dear Members of Congress,

Robbie (Robert Paul Goebel) was my baby boy, the younger of two sons. He was a beautiful child and young man with sparkling blue eyes and unruly blonde curls. During his childhood, he was outgoing, always the clown, capturing everyone with his silliness, sweet smile, laugh and charming good looks.



There were so many wonderful attributes we loved so much about Robbie.

His singing, which he did well even when goofing around. He could sew and when a pair of skater pants he loved wore out, he would mend them himself. His sense of style was unique. He wasn't afraid to be different, and independent...always a trendsetter. He loved classic rock and could sing all the words to Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, to name a few. He was messy, never threw anything away (including old broken shoelaces), never hung up his towels, and would much rather be playing than doing homework or studying.

He was a truly very caring and kind person. He would recognize when people are sad or hurting, and would ask if they are alright. And if needed, his hugs came freely and were always warm and sincere.

Rob was always so good at every hobby he tried. When he was four-years old, he wanted a skateboard as a gift. He would spend hours on that Spiderman board trying to figure out how to ride and maneuver. Through the years, that hobby grew into a passion. He was extremely talented and focused on getting better and mastering tricks. I think collectively he probably went through up to 50 boards during his childhood while gaining confidence and skill.

He was equally as good at snowboarding and was on the black diamond trails the very day he tried the sport. He took to BMX around ninth grade, building and riding custom bikes, spending days at Penn Skate, Catty Woods and the Bethlehem skate park. He would ride with friends who formed a group called Undefined. They traveled, shot videos and formed a small family of friends through riding.

When he entered high school, Rob decided to attend the tech school part time to learn to weld. His plans were to learn the trade, co-op during the year and find work upon graduation. He was a good student, and a terrific welder his first and second year of high school. By his sophomore year, the grades became more of a struggle, but he continued to excel in welding.

During this time, he also took an interest in freshwater fishing and kayaking. He loved spending time outdoors, fly fishing, salmon fishing, pond fishing - any kind, actually. He was content on the water and relished perfecting technique and the satisfaction of a well-earned catch. Folklore was that some ponds in the area had sizable fish and he was intent of catching them. He always threw his catch back - that was just how he was - return it for the next fisherman, whether it was him or not.

Around the age of 16, soon after he learned to drive and gained some freedom, Rob began to lose interest in his hobbies. His moods grew darker, school was a struggle and he seemed to be lost in who he was, or what he wanted to become. During this time, he was smoking pot which escalated to

dabbing. Looking back now, and in later conversations with him, he was struggling with anxiety and depression. Angry and violent outbursts, followed by his remorse, and loved ones walking on eggshells became all too common in our household. Rob had turned from my sweet boy to a strong and unpredictable young man that I no longer recognized and tried desperately to understand.

To ease the anxiety he felt, and the tensions within, his use and choice of drugs escalated and, with that, violent outbursts grew to the point where he moved in with his father with hopes that a change in environment would help. It didn't. Our worlds continued to unravel as Rob began using heroin, likely fueling his addiction through any means possible. We begged for him to face his addiction but he remained in denial.

At the age of 18, he finally agreed he needed help and willingly went to rehab. For six weeks, there was hope and talk of his future in sobriety. He then transferred to a longer residential rehab that would provide three months of therapy and transitioning. The freedom it offered took him right back to the circle of people who preyed on his vulnerabilities. Rob stayed three weeks before he discharged himself, took a bus back to Allentown, and was high by nightfall. The talk of obtaining a sponsor, attending meetings, and a life without drugs was gone. The monster had taken him again.

Nine days later Rob was found alone, dead in his truck in a Wal Mart parking lot. He wanted so badly to beat his addiction and foreshadowed his death often, attempting to explain to me it was a physical pain and yearning that never, ever went away. His cries on the telephone and in texts during his darkest hours are none any mother wants to hear or read. I would give anything to receive those texts again, to have just one more chance to save him.

In the end, my Rob is another statistic in this country's opioid epidemic and a surge in fentanyl that fills the purses of the heartless and greedy. To those who did not know him, he was a drug addict who made his choices and why should we care? But Rob, like thousands of men and women who were murdered by fentanyl, had talent and dreams. He was someone's son, stepson, brother, grandson, nephew and friend. He was a human being, and he was deeply loved.

To the members of Congress and anyone who can make laws effective in the country, I ask you to remember Robbie and the thousands upon thousands lost to murder by fentanyl. Action is crucial. Without it, another generation will be lost.

Regards,

Caryn Wilkie