

Public Comment: PA Opioid Trust “Listening Session” - Public Meeting 8/21/2026

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TRANSCRIPT:

Thank you for inviting me here today. I'm Gail Groves Scott. I'm a mother of five. I'm a public health policy researcher and advocate. I have a masters in public health and I'm a doctoral candidate in health policy at St. Joseph's University. I'm representing an independent organization that I own called Health Policy Network in Lancaster and I welcome feedback. You can email me at gail@healthpolicynetwork.com.

I have expertise on opioid prevention, opioid marketing, and settlements with pharma, not just from my academic studies, but I have lived experience.

I was a pharmaceutical rep for 16 years and I sold opioids for pain management and addiction, before changing careers to work in public health research and advocacy. I became a whistleblower that helped federal and state governments get back billions for taxpayers in a False Claims Act case.

Then I helped the federal government investigate Purdue Pharma. I served as a fact witness to a grand jury. This is personal to me — how these funds are being spent.

I presented peer-reviewed research nationally on access to medications for opioid use disorder. I've presented on pharmacist provision of addiction medications. My dissertation research is on the public health impacts of drug company promotion of addiction medication.

I have some expertise to offer this group, but the choices this body has made under Chairman VanKirk's leadership have baffled me.

The early secrecy of this board's meetings have been well documented:

- The board's leadership has been dismissive of the Sunshine Act despite claiming that they follow it.
- You hired multiple vendors and contracted for professional services without putting out a public request for proposals or a bid process.
- Your transparency got a rough start, in our view; but you've been doing better in some ways.

I showed up at your first public meeting, disappointed that I was only allowed to observe.

I showed up at several later meetings.

I was disappointed to hear Chairman VanKirk publicly complaining at one of those meetings about having to rent space for the public to attend at all.

You don't see the value in our expertise— in our lived experience?

The argument that the only role for public input is at the county level just simply does not hold water. Guess what? Many of those counties do not allow the public to be involved before they make a decision about where to spend or allocate their money.

For example —Lancaster County— they followed your lead. They hold their work group meetings in secret just like this group.

Your working groups are wrestling with difficult decisions about what spending is approved. You've talked about that at every board meeting. Exhibit E's instructions have required you to make interpretations. You have been guiding the allocations made by the 67 counties and they begged you for more guidance.

Yet you have made the choice to oppose and litigate requests for transparency, instead of just being transparent.

Instead of allowing us to attend and have dialogue and provide input in the meetings where you were making these important decisions in real time.

You made a decision **to treat us as adversaries instead of as collaborators**. I don't understand it.

What do you have to hide that requires this level of secrecy? I mean what?

Senator Greg Rothman had the courage to say that keeping the public from attending your working group meetings was wrong. There are new board members here today. I ask you to make a fresh start, to make different decisions going forward.

Sunshine Laws, and the public right to know law set minimum requirements. They do not restrict the amount of public disclosure you are allowed to do.

- You chose secrecy; it was not forced on you.
- You are choosing to spend money in court to maintain that secrecy unnecessarily.
- You chose to change the language of the court order to clarify that you're not a public agency or a judicial agency. Why was that necessary?
- Why is it necessary to oppose perfectly reasonable right to know requests from journalists?

Senator Greg Rothman also questioned in February why you're spending huge sums on legal services. A major portion of the 1.5 million administrative cost.

Chairman VanKirk defended it – as a good value – discounted rates –within your budget.

Chairman VanKirk, respectfully, it's time to stop gaslighting us.

Every dollar earned from that interest could be going towards programs saving lives.

I think you've lost sight of *who your client is here*.

You are representing me;

you are representing the public to see that this unique and finite stream of funds is not wasted.

You can divert the money you're spending on legal battles to hide documents and block public input – TO the counties who need funds.

At the December meeting or the next work group or sub-committee meeting, I ask this board to make a motion:

To allow public input, not only public comment periods at the end, but input *before* voting.

To get input from the experts who could help you with the complex decisions you were making – before you vote. That public dialogue that is sadly missing today.

My lived experience includes being the parent of a child in sustained recovery. My child is alive today due to access to overdose prevention services.

(Interrupted by Chairman Kirk: Your time is up. We will get back to you on many of the....)