

Senate Judiciary Committee,

I want to first thank you for the opportunity to speak and for taking the time to consider this vital proposal.

My name is Seth Dewey and I work for the Reno County Health Dept. and am a co-founder of the Kansas Recovery Network. I work in Health Education serving as the project coordinator for grants dealing with substance use and finding innovative approaches to substance use issues. We have worked tirelessly with multiple partners from all backgrounds from school districts to law enforcement. From medical professionals and EMS to the business and industry sector. We have realized that while our community coalition work has had success, we know that there is more to be done. Locally and statewide.

Provisional surveillance results from the State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System (SUDORS) show that at least 338 Kansas residents have died of drug overdose between January 1, 2021, and June 30, 2021. The tally represents a 54% increase from the 220 drug overdose deaths identified by SUDORS surveillance in the same 6-month time frame in 2020. Of the provisional 338 deaths, 149 involved fentanyl or fentanyl analogs. Fentanyl is driving the uptick in fatal drug overdoses due to it many times being mixed in with other substances or in counterfeit pills therefore being ingested unknowingly.

Fentanyl test strips can warn an individual if their substance contains Fentanyl and then give them the power to choose how to proceed. Of a group studied in Rhode Island, about half those that received a positive test result after using Fentanyl Test strips altered the way they used the substance by taking measures like not using alone, using a lesser amount, and in some cases even discarding the substance. Now... think if we could have had half of the 338 Kansans that died in the first 6 months of 2021 change their using pattern because of a simple piece of testing paper?

With the numbers we have seen nationally and now locally the residents of Kansas are hard at work with their cities and counties to reduce this current crisis. Much good is being done on many fronts in this great state. But we all know more can be done. HB 2277 needs to get pushed through to save lives and empower people from multiple sectors and backgrounds to be a part of a solution to this growing crisis.

Respectfully,

Seth Dewey