

Chairman and Sen. Warren and members of the Kansas Senate Judiciary Committee,

My name is Lisa Vayda, and I am a pharmacist in Wichita, KS. I am a proponent of House Bill 2277: Clarifying the definition of possession in the Kansas criminal code. Specifically, I am a proponent of excluding fentanyl testing strips as being considered “drug paraphernalia” page 6, line 27.

As a Kansas citizen, health care provider, and community advocate, I have worked for several years battling this awful opioid epidemic. The grim facts are that drug overdose deaths are increasing, especially involving synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl. Per the National Center for Health Statistics: Predicted deaths from drug overdoses in Kansas increased by 47% from June 2020 to June 2021 (396 deaths to 582 deaths). This rate increase is the second highest in the U.S. (<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm>)

Fentanyl is showing up as counterfeit oxycodone and Xanax or contaminating other illicit drugs, such as cocaine and methamphetamine. By employing fentanyl test strips, studies have shown that people who use drugs can be more informed about the drugs they are buying and using, leading to behavior change and adoption of harm reduction strategies. (<https://harmreduction.org/issues/fentanyl/fentanyl-test-strip-pilot/>)

Furthermore, earlier this year, the federal grant guidelines changed, and federal funding may be used to purchase fentanyl test strips in applicable programs. (<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/p0407-Fentanyl-Test-Strips.html>). This includes the CDC’s Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) cooperative in which Kansas is a participant. However, organizations in Kansas cannot do so because of the current state statutes.

I come here today representing many Kansas Citizens who have shared their heartbreaking narratives about their child, loved one, colleague, or friend who might be alive today if they were made aware of the dangerous fentanyl lacing their drugs by using testing strips and acting accordingly. Passage of Kansas HB2277 would be a simple step that Kansas Legislators could take to improve harm reduction measures in our great state and potentially save lives.

Respectfully submitted,

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