

Date: January 29, 2022

From: Sarah Veestart-Wright

Ref: Support for excluding fentanyl test strips from the definition of “drug paraphernalia” in HB 2277

Senate Judiciary Committee

Chairwoman Warren and Members of the Committee:

Hello, Chairwoman Warren and Members of the Committee. My name is Sarah Veestart-Wright. I am a second-year medical student at the University of Kansas of Wichita. I am writing you regarding HB 2277.

Even in the short time I have been school I have seen the effects that fentanyl has had on the community. Many people are unaware that they are using fentanyl. They believe that they are using heroin or pharmaceutical opioid pills and are surprised to learn that their drug test is negative for those substances but positive for fentanyl. This is just the beginning. Fentanyl is more available, less expensive, and much less safe. If this pattern continue it won't be long until more substances are laced with fentanyl.

By withholding knowledge about the substances people are using, Kansans are dying. We have the tools to help save lives and one of them is fentanyl testing. Fentanyl test are simple to use, inexpensive, and give rapid results about the presence of fentanyl in a sample. By giving people the knowledge about the fentanyl status of a sample, people are able to make a safer decision. These could include: having naloxone (Narcan) available, using a smaller amount or in a safer way, or perhaps not using at all.

According to the state law fentanyl test strips are drug paraphernalia. The fentanyl test strips did not exist when the paraphernalia was written. As the staffing and resource shortage increase the access to treatment access decreases. Who is benefitting when preventable overdose deaths continue happen due to lack of knowledge? Why criminalize the potentially life saving fentanyl test strip? I would strongly encourage you to update the paraphernalia law with the amendment in HB 2277. Excluding test strips from the paraphernalia categorization, will allow community organizations and consumers to distribute and use this tool in an effort to save lives without the risk of being arrested.

Sincerely,

Sarah Veestart-Wright