

Senate Judiciary Committee

Chairwoman Warren and Members of the Committee:

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Warren and Members of the Committee. My name is Hassan Zbeeb. I am a medical student in Wichita, Kansas, undergoing training at the University of Kansas School of Medicine Wichita campus. I am writing to you regarding HB 2277. As you are aware, increased concentrations of poverty, fallouts of the coronavirus pandemic, and the rise of fentanyl and other synthetic opioids have provided us a rather grim forecast of the future. *Preventable* overdoses are taking the lives of Kansans in record numbers.

Addiction medicine specialists in Wichita are reporting that drug consumers have no idea that fentanyl is a contaminant in whatever drug they are using. The manufacturing, distribution, and abuse of illicit substances jeopardizes public and private safety. But there is nothing more dangerous than being under-equipped with the knowledge to minimize unintentional and unwanted consequences. Fentanyl test strips are simple, inexpensive, and rapidly able to detect the presence of fentanyl in a drug sample. This technology informs a drug consumer so that they can potentially make a life-saving choice about their behavior. Whether it is using less, using a safer method, stopping use of that drug entirely, or seeking resources and treatment. In all these scenarios, death is less likely.

As future physicians in Kansas who will continue to clash with this opioid crisis head on, my classmates and I have vowed to always prioritize safety and safeguard a person's right to make an informed choice about their health. The reason we prioritize the latter goal so much in our education is because we know that lack of knowledge/awareness is a primary risk factor for morbidity and mortality in virtually everything. Clarity is essential. What is the state's interest in continuing to criminalize fentanyl test strips? I strongly encourage you to update the paraphernalia law with the amendment in HB 2277. By excluding test strips from paraphernalia categorization, we will allow consumers and community organizations to possess and distribute this tool without risking arrest in the effort of saving a life.

Sincerely,

Hassan Zbeeb, MS