

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
CONFEREE TRANSMITTAL FORM

Bill # HB2277

Date of testimony 1/30/22

TESTIMONY MUST BE SUBMITTED AT LEAST 24 HOURS IN ADVANCE OF THE HEARING

Print Name of person testifying: Nelsey Ellis

Title/Organization, if applicable: _____

Phone # 913-602-6934 email: nellis@kpcnc.org

Name of contact person if different from above: _____

Phone # _____ email: _____

Please check both testimony type and delivery method applicable:

Proponent _____

In-person _____

Opponent _____

Via WebEx _____

Neutral _____

Written only _____

Please submit 15 written copies and a PDF electronic copy of testimony no later than 24 hours in advance of the hearing to:

Kim Sage, Committee Assistant
Senate Judiciary Committee
State Capitol
300 SW 10th Ave., Room 418H-E
Topeka, KS 66612
kim.sage@senate.ks.gov
785-296-6817

Date: January 1/30/2022

From: Kelsey Ellis, RN,BSN

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:

I am Kelsey Ellis, RN, BSN. I am a nurse case manager and behavioral health care coordinator at a community health center in Junction City, KS and Manhattan, KS. I have started and now coordinate a medication assisted program for opioid use disorder and other addictions. I have dedicated my career and my future to addiction medicine. I am originally from Kansas City and now live in rural Junction City. I have seen addiction effect the lives from different areas in Kansas. As a young child I was exposed to the disease of addiction as it was all around me. I know it is very simple to think- if you don't want to overdose or suspect fentanyl in drugs- simply don't use them. If only the disease of addiction were that simple. It is a complex and multidimensional disease. I have never suffered from addiction, but I can tell you I have been deeply exposed in my personal life and have spent the last 2 years of my career researching and understanding the disease of addiction. I have listened to dozens of stories on how the addiction started and I challenge you to listen also to understand the mere reason behind someone's addiction. I think most people would change their perception on addiction after hearing just a few. Please look at the pharmacology of opioids on the body and see the large threshold it can have on one's brain. Addiction stems from unhealthy coping mechanisms, which we all have. Some just unhealthier than others. Had a hard day and say "I could really use a drink?"

We include surgeon general labels on cigarettes. You can look at a food item and see the calorie and fat count and decide to eat it or not. We provide the opportunity to let mother's test their breast milk for alcohol. All of this is in effort to make healthier decisions, why would we not provide the opportunity for other substances? Through history we can see that prohibiting something will not make it go away. Restricting unhealthy food will not make diabetes go away. But providing Kansans, human beings, the resources and opportunities to make healthier decisions. Now I have had several dozens of people seek out my clinic for assistance with opioid addiction. I can tell you in my professional opinion- I hear 2 things. 1.) being that I did not know that there was fentanyl in what I was using or 2.) I took this pill and it was like any other hold on me I ever had and was instantly hooked on it. Later finding out there was fentanyl in it. I can tell you that the withdrawals are more intense and come on within hours of not using. Making it harder and harder to get away from them.

We see the trends; we know that more and more people are dying from overdoses. We know more and more drugs are being mixed with fentanyl. Please let us try and prevent overdoses and save lives. I am strongly encouraging you to update the paraphernalia categorization with the amendment in HB 2277. By allowing people to test their substances, we can provide people to make better decisions when it comes to their use. Times are different from when the law was written and we know in healthcare we have to keep up with the time to create better outcomes. There is so much we can do as a state to make a difference and legalizing fentanyl test strips is just the beginning.

Thank you,
Kelsey Ellis RN, BSN