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**Proponent Testimony on HB 2140
Presented to the House Committee on Education**

**By Sara Hortenstine
Division Chief, Youth Services
Office of the Attorney General**

February 6, 2025

Madam Chair Estes and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2140, a vital piece of legislation that addresses the escalating fentanyl crisis affecting children and youth across Kansas.

Fentanyl is one of the deadliest drugs to ever reach our state. The rapid increase in its presence has contributed to the overdose deaths of 33 Kansas children between 2020 and 2022, a stark contrast to **zero** deaths from fentanyl in 2018 and 2019. This synthetic opioid is especially dangerous because even a small amount can cause a fatal overdose. Fentanyl can be disguised in numerous forms, making it nearly impossible to detect without proper testing. Even fentanyl test strips are not completely reliable in identifying its presence, and while Narcan can save lives in some overdose situations, it may not always reverse the drug's effects. As a result, it is highly likely that many of the overdose fatalities among Kansas children occurred because they were unaware of the dangers or unknowingly ingested fentanyl. It is critical that Kansas children and youth fully understand the severe risks involved with fentanyl, and that even a single pill or one-time use can be fatal.

The Kansas D.A.R.E. program has been a trusted resource in our state for over 30 years, helping to support schools and guide children toward positive life choices including safety from drugs. In 1999, the legislature established a Statewide D.A.R.E. Coordinator position, appointed and supported by the Kansas Attorney General's Office, to oversee and enhance the program's impact across the state.

The passage of HB 2140 would ensure that Kansas gains a dedicated statewide D.A.R.E. educator, extending the program's reach to all parts of the state, particularly underserved and rural areas. This would guarantee that every school district, regardless of its size, resources, or location, has access to up to date information, resources, and educational trainings for their students and community which focuses on the dangers of fentanyl and other opioid drugs.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sara Hortenstine".

Sara Hortenstine
Division Chief, Youth Services
Office of the Attorney General