



900 S.W. Jackson Street, Suite 600
Topeka, Kansas 66612-1212
(785) 296-3203
www.ksde.org

Danny Zeck
District 1

Melanie Haas
District 2

Michelle Dombrosky
District 3

Ann E. Mah
District 4

Cathy Hopkins
District 5

Dr. Deena Horst
District 6

Dennis Hershberger
District 7

Betty J. Arnold
District 8

Jim Porter
District 9

Jim McNiece
District 10

NEUTRAL IN-PERSON TESTIMONY
HB 2709
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2024

Mr. Chairman and Committee:

Thank you for allowing our neutral testimony on behalf of the Kansas State Board of Education (KSBE) regarding HB 2709. HB 2709 requires the KSBE to establish a fentanyl poisoning awareness week and develop statewide standards for instruction on the prevention of the abuse of and addiction to fentanyl and other opioids.

The KSBE has already addressed the fentanyl and opioid issue in its Kansas Model Curricular Standards for Health Education. You can find those model standards here: [Kansas Model Curricular Standards for Health Education rev110218.pdf \(ksde.org\)](https://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/Standards/ModelStandards/ModelStandardsforHealthEducationrev110218.pdf) In specific, there are age-appropriate standards that address substance use, abuse, and addiction for grades K through 12 starting on page 30. School districts may use the curriculum of their choosing to teach these model standards, and many are available. In fact, the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services has already developed a Kansas Overdose Strategic Plan and makes Narcan and fentanyl test strips available to the public at no charge through the Kansas Naloxone Program. We understand the Attorney General is also interested in reviving the drug abuse resistance education program (D.A.R.E) for use in schools. One of the state goals of D.A.R.E. is to educate students about fentanyl and other opioid drugs (HB 2613).

The KSBE agrees that informing students about fentanyl and opioid poisoning is a worthy goal and could save lives. However, we question the usefulness of a mandated “fentanyl poisoning awareness week”. Public schools already address any number of issues that impact students’ lives and need to be flexible in addressing them. Vaping, bullying, suicide, alcohol, and sex abuse are just a few that come to mind. The “crisis of the week” changes over time and varies by location. There is no need for a statutory requirement for this one drug when next year there could very well be another, more urgent, need. Also, there is already a national Red Ribbon Week each year. Red Ribbon Week is the nation’s oldest and largest drug prevention awareness program.

We applaud the intention of the bill’s sponsors, but believe a new statute and mandate is not the answer. Thus our “neutral” stand on HB 2709.

