



## Uniting Neighbors Against Crime

February 13, 2023

Dear Rep. Landwehr, Rep. Eplee, Rep. Ruiz, Rep. Barth, Rep. Bergkamp, Rep. Bergquist, Rep. Blex, Rep. Boyd, Rep. Bryce, Rep. Buehler, Rep. Clifford, Rep. Ellis, Rep. Gardner, Rep. Haswood, Rep. Oropeza, Rep. Turner, Rep. Vaughn,

I am the Program Director for Safe Streets Wichita, a Drug-Free Communities and Overdose 2 Action grantee. These are CDC support programs leading efforts to mobilize communities to address drug and overdose prevention. National Center for Health Statistics, predicted deaths from drug overdoses in Kansas increased by **47%** from June 2020 to June 2021 (396 to 582 deaths). From August 2021 to August 2022 (627 to 691 deaths) - we continue to see higher-than-average overdose deaths in our State. Many of these deaths were due to synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl. That increase is the second highest in the U.S. This is not a list we want to top AND many of these deaths could have been prevented. Kansas counties most at risk of opioid overdoses included Labette, Sedgwick, Allen, Harper, Crawford, Brown, Wilson, Leavenworth, Shawnee, Douglas, and Atchison, along with several others.

[Safe Streets Wichita](#), a substance use prevention coalition in Wichita, authored a policy report titled "[Harm Reduction and the Prevention of Opioid Deaths in Kansas](#)" in July 2021 ([partnersforwichita.org/policypriorities](http://partnersforwichita.org/policypriorities)). I've included the link to the report in this letter. The report lists 5 strategies Kansas can take to prevent opioid deaths and reduce harm:

- Allow for fentanyl contamination testing.
- Comprehensive 911 Good Samaritan Laws (GLSs).
- Increase access and utilization of naloxone.
- Facilitate medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals.
- Facilitate syringe services programs (SSPs).

With the help of **Kansas House Bill 2390**

[http://kslegislature.org/li/b2023\\_24/measures/hb2390/](http://kslegislature.org/li/b2023_24/measures/hb2390/), lethal doses of fentanyl could be identified in a wide array of illicit and counterfeit drugs. Fentanyl test strips (FTS) could prevent opioid overdoses and save lives by better-informing individuals who use drugs whether it contains fentanyl. As it stands, FTS are considered drug paraphernalia under state law. Additionally, Federal guidelines have changed and organizations are allowed to use federal

funding to purchase and distribute Fentanyl test strips. However, we CANNOT do this until statutes change in Kansas.

I can be reached via email at [aonya@partnersforwichita.org](mailto:aonya@partnersforwichita.org) if you need additional information or would like to discuss harm reduction and prevention of opioid deaths in our great state of Kansas. Many lives will be saved, the sooner these strategies are implemented.

Thank you for your service, and please do not let Kansas be the leader in the nation for the percentage increase in drug overdose deaths.

Best,

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