



Senator Beverly Gossage and members of the Senate Health and Welfare Committee
Testimony RE: HB 2547 written only: Proponent
March 12, 2024

The American Lung Association in Kansas and Greater Kansas City supports the passage of HB 2547 that will allow schools in Kansas to provide more immediate access to medications to ensure the health of students with asthma or respiratory distress. Asthma can be a deadly disease if flare-ups are not treated immediately, so this bill has the potential to save lives for schools that use this authority.

Asthma impacts millions of lives and has a tremendous impact on our nation's healthcare system and economy. In the U.S., over 25 million Americans, including 5.1 million children have asthma.¹ Kansas nearly 60,000 children have asthma.² Asthma is also responsible for more than \$80 billion annually in economic costs and causes more than 5.2 million missed school days and 8.7 million missed days of work nationwide.³

Because asthma attacks can occur anytime and often without warning, children with asthma should always have access to medication that can quickly reverse the blockages in their lungs. This life-saving medication, called a short-acting bronchodilator, is easy to administer, inexpensive, and very safe.

Unfortunately, when children do not have asthma medication, which can occur for a variety of reasons such as forgetting it or not being able to afford it, schools have few options. A parent may not be immediately accessible or close enough to respond promptly. Even if they can, there is a delay during which the asthma attack often gets worse. In such cases, the school will need to call 911. Doing so is likely to lead to an ambulance transport costing \$500 or more and an emergency department visit costing thousands more. Such events also take children out of the classroom for days at a time and further impede their learning.

That is why HB 2547 is so important as it allows schools to maintain a stock supply of asthma medication for student use when medication is otherwise unavailable. It represents a simple and low-cost solution to a problem that could save both lives and money. In total, [17 states](#) have passed legislation or have administrative guidelines in place allowing schools to stock asthma medications.

However, there are key provisions that should be included in this legislation to ensure it will help as many of our state's kids with asthma as possible. These include:

- Making sure the legislation applies to all public and nonpublic schools.
- Applying the legislation to both students who have been diagnosed with asthma and students suffering from respiratory distress that may not have been diagnosed yet.
- Ensuring that school staff other than school health officials are required to be properly trained in the proper use and administration of the stock asthma medication.
- Making certain that all school staff, officials or health care providers involved in administration or prescribing of stock asthma medication receive liability protection except in cases of willful or gross negligence.

Thankfully, HB 2547 includes all of these elements, and the American Lung Association encourages your support of this legislation.

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¹ CDC. 2019 National Health Interview Survey.

² CDC. 2019 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.

³ Nurmagambetov TA, Kuwahara R, Garbe P. The Economic Burden of Asthma in the United States, 2008-2013. *Annals of the American Thoracic Society*, 2018; doi: 10.1513/AnnalsATS.201703-259OC.