



Testimony
Education Committee
June 17, 2025

Respectfully Submitted by:
Joe Mazzola, Health Commissioner
Franklin County Public Health

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 57. On behalf of my colleagues at Franklin County Public Health (FCPH), I offer my support to House Bill 57.

Naloxone is a proven life-saving measure and this bill ensures that school districts choosing to supply overdose-reversal drugs, like naloxone, can establish policies for their proper storage, training, and rapid administration in the event of a student overdose. With these policies in place, we can create safer school environments and a community that is equipped to respond immediately when it matters most.

According to Franklin County Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Evaluation System (CARES) data there were **167** ED admissions among Franklin County residents aged **0 to 17 years** in **2024**. CARES data also reported **50 overdose deaths** among Franklin County youth aged 15 to 19 years between 2007-2022; that is the equivalent of two classrooms of students at many central Ohio Schools. Any life lost to a preventable overdose is one too many but preventing overdose related death for our school aged kids must be a priority.

FCPH is deeply committed to ensuring our communities have access to harm reduction and overdose prevention resources. We collaborate closely with our community partners as part of the Columbus and Franklin County Addiction Plan Coalition (CFCAP). Together we track overdose data trends and issue alerts and respond to overdose surges throughout the community.

In 2025, thanks to funding from the State of Ohio, FCPH was able to launch a mobile outreach vehicle to provide Naloxone to our residents in high-risk areas and at community events, to ensure that this life saving resource is in the hands of the people that need it. And the data shows it is having an impact.

In 2024, FCPH distributed nearly 23,000 Naloxone Kits, the highest number of kits in our program's history. Most naloxone kits distributed by Franklin County Public Health

(FCPH) are funded by the Ohio Department of Health's (ODH) Project Death Avoided with Naloxone (DAWN). Through Project DAWN funding, 371,076 kits were distributed in Ohio in 2024. Nearly 18% (65,412) of Project DAWN naloxone kits were distributed in Franklin County.

ODH vital statistics and the Franklin County Coroner's office report overdose deaths have decreased nearly 13% from 2020-2023 and an additional 34% from 2023-2024, due in part to the efficacy of harm reduction resources and overdose reversal drugs like Naloxone.

In 2024, 934 people who had previously owned naloxone reported that their previous naloxone kit was used for an overdose reversal, which is when someone who was overdosing receives naloxone and survives. That is 934 people who can now seek out recovery options and break out of the cycle of addiction.

Despite the improvement we're seeing throughout the county and the state, disparities continue, and accidental overdoses remain a leading cause of death for many of our residents. FCPH is committed to supporting schools who chose to supply overdose reversal drugs and will serve as a resource to assist with identifying storage and training protocols.

FCPH currently works with 18 Naloxone distribution partners who were trained in naloxone administration and distribution by FCPH staff, obtain naloxone from FCPH and distribute it to the communities they serve on an ongoing basis. We will work in a similar supportive role with interested school districts throughout the county to provide and supply Naloxone, as well as facilitate trainings and provide any technical assistance or support needed including establishing policies for proper storage.

FCPH previously supported HB 47 which was signed into law by Governor DeWine last summer, placing AEDs in schools, practice fields, and parks to prevent cardiac deaths in our students, teachers and coaches. We believe this bill has the same lifesaving implications.

FCPH remains dedicated to substance use prevention and recovery efforts in our communities but it is vitally important that we take the necessary steps to keep people alive so they can benefit from recovery resources. We can't change the fact that fentanyl exists. But we can change whether our schools are equipped to deal with it. House Bill 57 will help us protect those lives. And in doing so, it will remind every student, every parent, and every educator in this state that their safety and their future matters. Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.



Respectfully submitted,

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