



Proponent Testimony
Association of Ohio Health Commissioners
Senate Bill 296
March 23, 2022

Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee:

On behalf of the Association of Health Commissioners (AOHC), this testimony is submitted in support of Senate Bill 296, which would legalize the use of narcotic testing products, including fentanyl test strips, and deregulate naloxone. If passed, this legislation would be a significant step forward for local communities and organizations working to prevent fentanyl-related overdose deaths in the state.

AOHC represents Ohio's 112 local health districts, many of which administer Project DAWN (Deaths Avoided With Naloxone) programs in their communities. Project DAWN is a cornerstone of the local harm reduction programs employed by local health departments to prevent overdose deaths, through the distribution of naloxone and provision of training and support to the public.

Making it possible for individuals to check their drugs for the presence of fentanyl using fentanyl test strips is vital to the avoidance of accidental opioid overdose. According to a 2018 John Hopkins Study of active drug users, 70% of respondents reported that knowing that their drugs contained fentanyl would lead them to modify their behavior.ⁱ Another study, conducted out of North Carolina, concluded that individuals with a positive fentanyl test strip test result were five times more likely to report changes in drug use behavior compared to those with a negative result.ⁱⁱ

Under current law, paraphernalia is defined to include items used to test drugs, including fentanyl test strips. This leaves many Ohio communities and organizations fearful of potential criminal and civil penalties for distributing these life-saving tools. Senate Bill 296 would align Ohio with other states such as Arizona, which updated its state law in 2021 to remove fentanyl test strips from the definition of drug paraphernalia.

Along with the legalization of fentanyl test strips, Senate Bill 296 would also remove barriers to the distribution and administration of naloxone. Naloxone is a life-saving drug that can reverse an opioid overdose, including those involving fentanyl. This bill exempts naloxone from most Board of Pharmacy distribution laws and broadens access to naloxone to all Ohioans.

On behalf of its 112 local health district members, AOHC supports increased access to naloxone and fentanyl test strips, and asks this committee to favorably vote for Senate Bill 296.

Thank you for your consideration.

Contact Information:

Beth Bickford, Executive Director
aohc_1@aohc.net
614-832-0336 (cell)

ⁱ Fentanyl Overdose Reduction Checking Analysis Study. https://americanhealth.jhu.edu/sites/default/files/website-media/resources/Fentanyl_Executive_Summary_032018.pdf

ⁱⁱ Fentanyl test strips as an opioid overdose prevention strategy: Findings from a syringe services program in the Southeastern United States. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0955395918302135>