

**Ohio Senate
Senate Health Committee
Senate Bill 296
Megan Burke
Mental Health & Addiction Advocacy Coalition
March 23, 2022**

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee, my name is Megan Burke, and I am the State Program and Policy Director for the Mental Health & Addiction Advocacy Coalition (MHAC). Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill 296, legislation that deregulates naloxone access as well as legalizes the use of narcotic testing products.

The MHAC is a statewide organization engaged in local and state level policy work, that actively advocates to increase awareness and improve the lives of those impacted by mental illnesses and addiction disorders. With over 130 member organizations located around the state and in our Northeast and Southwest Ohio Hubs, our diverse membership reflects the unique perspectives of those impacted by untreated behavioral health disorders. In addition to mental health and addiction service providers and Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health (ADAMH) boards, our members include major medical institutions, for-profit businesses, faith-based groups, educational institutions, and government entities, among others.

As we continue to receive data from the Ohio Department of Health on unintentional drug overdoses and hear reports from our on-the-ground partners, our local communities need help protecting Ohioans. In 2020 alone illicit fentanyl was involved with 81% of Ohio's overdose deaths. Fentanyl test strips are 96-100% accurate in detecting the presence of fentanyl, are easy to use, and are cost effective. By removing fentanyl test strips from the definition of drug paraphernalia, we will ensure Ohioans will not face criminal or civil penalties for performing a life-saving action.

This legislation would also remove existing regulatory barriers for the distribution of naloxone and allow any Ohioan or government entity to purchase, possess, administer, or distribute naloxone. The language also authorizes an individual to administer naloxone to another who is apparently experiencing an opioid-related overdose.

We are pleased to join The Governor's RecoveryOhio Office and the State of Ohio Board of Pharmacy in supporting this live-saving legislation. Thank you to the bill sponsors, Senators Steve Huffman and Nathan Manning for bringing Ohio this legislation. I am available by email or phone to answer any questions of the committee.

Thank you,

Megan Burke
MHAC State Program and Policy Director
mburke@mhaadvocacy.org | 419-905-6824

Offices

5050 Madison Rd. | Cincinnati, OH 45227 | 513.378.1488
4500 Euclid Ave. | Cleveland, OH 44103 | 216.432.7262
175 South Third St., Suite 350 | Columbus, OH 43215 | 614.745.0740 ext. 306