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TO: House Criminal Justice Committee  
FROM: Gary Daniels, Chief Lobbyist, ACLU of Ohio  
DATE: May 25, 2022  
RE: House Bill 456 – Proponent testimony

To Chairman LaRe, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide proponent testimony for House Bill 456.

Ohio and the United States remain in a crisis of drug overdoses and overdose deaths. Unfortunately, the crisis continues to worsen, not improve.

A couple weeks ago, The Center for Disease Control estimated overdose deaths in 2021 numbered 108,000, a 15% increase from 2020, and a record high. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, among the 50 states and District of Columbia, Ohio ranks 6<sup>th</sup> worst for opioid overdose deaths and 5<sup>th</sup> worst for all drug overdose deaths in 2020. Over the past several years, fentanyl, carfentanil, and closely related compounds have contributed to these increased deaths to the point they are now ultimately responsible for well over half of them.

We did not get here overnight and we will not solve or minimize these problems in quick order. Long term, intermediate, and immediate solutions are all needed. Bipartisan House Bill 456 is desperately needed triage that will unquestionably save lives across Ohio. HB 456 does this by making the simplest of tweaks; it exempts fentanyl test strips from Ohio law regarding use and/or possession of drug paraphernalia.

Whether it is via HB 456 or other legislation, the ACLU of Ohio also encourages this body to incentivize the purchase and use of these test strips around Ohio so they are more widely available and will save even more lives.

Of course, much more is needed to address drug addiction and overdoses throughout Ohio. But HB 456 is a step in the right direction and the ACLU of Ohio encourages its passage.