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**Before the Kansas House Committee on Education
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Proponent Testimony on House Bill 2489
Submitted by Sara Hortenstine
On Behalf of the Office of the Attorney General**

Chairperson Estes, Vice Chairperson McNorton, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of House Bill 2489 on behalf of the Office of the Attorney General (OAG).

HB 2489 addresses two critical and complementary components of youth substance use prevention and overdose response, age-appropriate fentanyl education in Kansas schools and the availability of naloxone to reverse opioid overdoses in emergency situations. The data reviewed by the OAG demonstrates a clear and urgent need for both.

According to the Kansas State Child Death Review Board's [2025 Annual Report](#), Kansas experienced 17 drug-related deaths among children ages 0 to 17 in 2023. Drug-related deaths include overdoses or toxicity involving illicit substances, prescription medications, or over-the-counter drugs. Among youth ages 15 to 17, poisoning, overdose, or acute intoxication was the second leading cause of unintentional injury death. Youth in this age group accounted for 69% of all drug-related child deaths.

Fentanyl has emerged as the primary driver of this trend. Between 2020 and 2023, Kansas recorded 48 fentanyl-involved child deaths, representing 74% of all drug-related child deaths during that period. By comparison, there were zero fentanyl-related child deaths between 2016 and 2019. These data reflect a dramatic and dangerous shift in the substances contributing to youth mortality in Kansas.

National data mirrors this pattern. In 2023, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 105,007 drug overdose deaths across all age groups, with synthetic opioids, particularly fentanyl, playing a dominant role. Fentanyl is 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine, meaning even a very small amount can be lethal. Illicitly manufactured fentanyl is frequently mixed into counterfeit pills or other substances without the user's knowledge, significantly increasing overdose risk.

Education is a foundational prevention strategy, and Kansas is well positioned to implement the educational components of HB 2489. The OAG has been coordinating certifications for law enforcement officers to teach the D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program in schools across the state. D.A.R.E. is a police officer-led, evidence-based series of classroom lessons serving students from kindergarten through 12th grade and is designed to help youth resist peer pressure and make safe, healthy decisions.

The D.A.R.E. program in Kansas has repeatedly adapted its curriculum and messaging to remain relevant to emerging substance use trends, including fentanyl. The Statewide D.A.R.E. Coordinator plays a critical role in ensuring Kansas has a sufficient number of certified officers to provide instruction and mentorship to more than 510,000 K-12 students statewide. Currently, Kansas has more than 150 certified D.A.R.E. officers delivering curriculum in over 100 school districts. D.A.R.E. also offers free fentanyl education resources that schools can utilize, including age-appropriate in-class lessons, assemblies, and community presentations spanning elementary through high school levels.

Multiple states have begun enacting laws requiring fentanyl prevention education in schools, sometimes on an annual basis. In response to the fentanyl crisis, D.A.R.E. America has developed comprehensive opioid and fentanyl prevention education materials for K-12 students, reinforcing that HB 2489 aligns with both national trends and existing evidence-based practices already operating in Kansas schools.

Equally important, HB 2489 requires schools to maintain a stock supply of naloxone and establishes clear policies for storage, administration, and oversight. Naloxone is a safe, effective medication that can temporarily reverse the life-threatening effects of an opioid overdose. As drug-related death rates have increased significantly since 2020, particularly in Kansas' most populous counties where rates are 63% higher than the rest of the state, ensuring access to overdose reversal medication in schools is a practical and life-saving safeguard.

While the OAG stands in support of HB 2489, the OAG recommends a technical change to the bill. The OAG recommends striking Section 3 in its entirety. Section 3 creates unnecessary ambiguity within the Kansas Fights Addiction Act by making schools eligible to receive grants from the Attorney General. First, schools are already eligible to receive grants under the act. Second, the Attorney General does not award grants under the Act; instead, grants are awarded by the Kansas Fights Addiction Grant Review Board, which the Attorney General supports, but does not direct. Section 3 as drafted does not provide new resources to schools, nor does it enable the Attorney General to provide resources to schools. As Section 3 does not change current law, the OAG recommends the committee strike this section as a technical amendment.

As an alternative, schools should be directed to seek naloxone from the State Naloxone Program. The Program provides free naloxone and naloxone training to individuals and organizations, and the Program is able to acquire naloxone for better than market rates. Furthermore, the Kansas Fights Addiction Grant Review Board has also funded the program through grants in recent years. By directing schools to acquire naloxone through the Program, we can increase the efficient use of state moneys and avoid overhead and implementation waste.

For these reasons and with the proposed technical amendment, the Office of the Attorney General strongly supports House Bill 2489 and urges the Committee to recommend its passage.

Thank you for your consideration.