

Testimony for HB 2159

Honorable members of the committee,

Thank you for allowing me time to express my full support for the bill that proposes the creation of a grant fund to provide Kansas law enforcement officers with access to life-saving opioid antagonists, such as Narcan. This legislation is not only crucial for saving lives in our communities, but it is also essential to the safety and well-being of our brave officers who serve on the frontlines of this ongoing crisis.

As we know, officers are often the first to arrive on the scene of an overdose. In many instances, they are the difference between life and death. With the rise of fentanyl and other powerful synthetic opioids flooding our streets, the threat to public safety has never been more dire. The potency of fentanyl, in particular, has led to a terrifying reality where even small amounts can prove fatal. It is no longer just those struggling with addiction who are at risk – it is people of all ages, from children and teens to parents and grandparents, who are falling victim to this epidemic.

Just a couple of months ago, an officer in Topeka suspected that he had been exposed to fentanyl while conducting his duties. Thankfully, due to the quick response of nearby personnel who had access to Narcan, the officer's life was saved. This is not an isolated incident, and it underscores the critical need for law enforcement to be equipped with opioid antagonists not just to save others, but to protect themselves. The risk of exposure is real, and our officers should have immediate access to the tools they need to protect themselves and others in the line of duty.

Opioid antagonists like Narcan are proven to reverse the effects of opioid overdoses, and they are incredibly effective in those crucial first minutes when every second counts. By providing officers with access to this life-saving medication, we ensure they are better equipped to respond to these emergencies, protect the public, and safeguard their own health.

The opioid epidemic affects all of us. It is not just a problem for individuals struggling with addiction – it is a public health crisis that impacts families, communities, and the very fabric of our society. If we truly want to take action to protect our families and our futures, we must ensure that those who are first on the scene in these life-or-death situations are fully prepared. This grant fund is a necessary step toward ensuring that our law enforcement officers have the resources they need to save lives, protect themselves, and serve our communities with the safety and dignity they deserve. I urge you to support this bill and take action to create a safer, healthier Kansas for all.

Thank You, Ashley Richey

