

TO: House Health and Human Services Committee
Chairman, Representative Jim Morrison

FROM: Kansas State Representative
Patricia Barbieri-Lightner
29th District

RE: House Bill 2478

DATE: January 29, 2004

Thank you Chairman Morrison and committee members for allowing me to appear before you today in support of HB 2478, otherwise known as The Kansas Student Self Medication Act , otherwise known as Bella's Act.

This bill would allow students from grades 6 through 12 who have asthma and anaphylaxis to carry and self-administer their prescribed life saving medications in school, or at a school sponsored activity when an emergency situation arises requiring these prescribed life saving medications.

The bill further provides that the student submit a written plan to this effect from their doctor, with an authorization that the student is instructed on the self-administration of said medications, and that the school be held harmless from liability incurred therefrom.

According to an article in the Star Magazine dated September 7, 2003 the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network reported that food-induced anaphylaxis is believed to cause about 30,000 trips to the emergency room and between 150 and 200 deaths each year.

Kansas is one of 26 states that does not provide the right for children to carry these life saving medications. And as the mother of Bella, who is both an asthmatic and has a food allergy which requires her to have an epinephrine to prevent an anaphylactic shock, I seized upon this bill as being an opportunity to provide for my daughter and so many others the ability to protect themselves.

Currently in Kansas, school policies concerning these type of medications and whether students can carry them varies from school district to school district. And in some schools, like the one my daughter is currently attending-she is totally disallowed from having her prescribed life saving medications with her at any age. The school nurse must keep the medications locked up and administer it.

In the same Star Magazine article, Jeffrey Wald, an allergist at Kansas City Allergy and Asthma, emphasized that people with a history of severe reactions to peanuts should carry an Epi-Pen, a spring-loaded syringe filled with a lifesaving dose of epinephrine, at all times. He further stated that, **“A delay in administering epinephrine is the one thing that increases the risk of an allergic person having a fatal reaction.”**

I believe we, as the state legislature, must continually work to protect our children. By giving our children the right to carry and self administer their prescribed life saving medications-we are allowing children to be pro-active in saving their own lives, rather than being forced to be passive.

I encourage this committee to step back and realize, if this were your child afflicted with these life threatening conditions, where would you want their prescribed life saving medications, on their immediate person for immediate access, or locked up safely away in a nurse's closet.

I submit to this committee, that allowing this matter to go unattended is denying those school children with asthma and anaphylaxis their rights to a safe and healthy learning experience.

Sincerely,

Patricia Barbieri-Lightner
State Representative
29th District