



Written Proponent Testimony on HB 2579
Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
March 12, 2024

Chairwoman Gossage and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for providing the opportunity for the Kansas Public Health Association (KPHA) to provide written testimony in support of HB 2579, which would authorize the board of emergency medical services to distribute non-prescription over-the-counter medications. KPHA is a professional organization that represents more than 800 public health practitioners, healthcare providers, researchers, advocates, and other professionals working together to build a healthier Kansas.

In 2022, 738 Kansans died as a result of drug overdose – a 9 percent increase in deaths in the last year and a 154 percent increase in deaths in the last decade.¹ This increase is substantially driven by synthetic opioids like fentanyl, which played a role in 56 percent of drug overdose deaths in 2022. The chance of surviving a drug overdose largely depends on timely access to medical assistance, like receiving OTC Naloxone. Under current statute, EMS providers are not expressly permitted to distribute these life-saving OTC medications.

HB 2579 would revise the current statute to authorize EMS providers to distribute OTC medications, equipping our first responders with the necessary tools to provide comprehensive care to their patients. This revision would serve as an evidence-based harm reduction strategy that can significantly reduce the risk of drug overdose deaths and save the lives of Kansans across the state.

We appreciate your consideration of HB 2579 and encourage you to support its passage.

Respectfully submitted,

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¹Kansas Department of Health and Environment. (2023). *Overdose Data Dashboard*. <https://www.kdhe.ks.gov/1309/Overdose-Data-Dashboard>