



**Written Proponent Testimony on HB 2487**  
**House Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice**  
**January 25, 2024**

Chairman Owens and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House Bill 2487, which would provide immunity from prosecution for certain drug crimes when persons seek or provide medical assistance related to the use of a controlled substance.

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.<sup>1</sup> 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 depends on how quickly one receives medical assistance, but research indicates that people witnessing an overdose are hesitant to seek help from first responders out of fear of arrest.<sup>2</sup> This illustrates a need for policy solutions to curb relentless and devastating surges in drug overdose deaths.

Kansas is one of only two states without a Good Samaritan law that shields bystanders from criminal liability when seeking medical assistance for someone experiencing a drug overdose. This legislation would save lives in our community by serving as a harm reduction strategy that encourages the public to render aid and call for help when witnessing an overdose.

Harm reduction is an evidence-based, community-driven public health strategy that mitigates death, injury, disease, and other harms associated with drug use.<sup>3</sup> Last year, Kansas made great strides in opioid-related harm reduction by decriminalizing fentanyl test strips. This year, House Bill 2487 gives us an opportunity to strengthen these strides by removing barriers that deter individuals from seeking help for someone experiencing an overdose. In turn, we can significantly reduce the risk of drug overdose deaths and save the lives of Kansans across the state.

I urge you to favorably pass this bill.

Sincerely,

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

<sup>2</sup>Legislative Analysis and Public Policy Association. (2022). Good Samaritan Fatal Overdose Prevention and Drug Induced Homicide: Summary of State Laws. <https://legislativeanalysis.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Good-Samaritan-Fatal-Overdose-Prevention-And-Drug-Induced-Homicide-Summary.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2023). *Harm Reduction*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/harm-reduction>