



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

George Lopez  
Chair  
Paramount Bank

Nicole Esquibel  
Vice Chair  
Avila University

Eric Burtin  
Secretary  
Burtin & Associates, Inc.

Trisha Hokanson  
Treasurer  
J.E. Dunn Construction

Rachel Arnett  
Blue Cross and Blue Shield  
of Kansas City

Sergeant Garron Carter  
Kansas City Missouri  
Police Department

Karen Gerson  
Community Volunteer

Patrick James Martin  
Cornerstone Companies

DJ Pierre  
Shaffer Lombardo Shurin

Richard D. Rhyne  
Rhyne ADR

Catherine Singleton  
Community Volunteer

Jenn Toro  
Spark & Sage

Chris Vernaci  
Oracle

PRESIDENT & CEO  
Emily Hage

Date: January 25, 2024

Emily Hage, President & CEO  
First Call Alcohol/Drug Prevention & Recovery

Chair Owens and Members of the Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for HB 2487, which provides immunity from prosecution for certain drug crimes when bystanders seek or provide medical assistance.

First Call Alcohol/Drug Prevention & Recovery (First Call) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that provides substance use prevention, education, and recovery services in the Greater Kansas City metropolitan area, including Johnson and Wyandotte Counties in Kansas. Over the last two years, First Call has developed overdose prevention programming in response to growing demand in our service area; we are the largest provider of free naloxone and drug testing strips in the metro area.

According to the CDC, there were 12,227 suspected overdoses in Kansas in 2023. From 2018 to 2022, fatal overdoses in the State increased by 153%. In 2021, the increase in overdose deaths in Kansas was the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in the nation (KCUR, "Kansas saw the nation's second-highest increase in drug deaths last year," May 11, 2022.) Overdose death is 100% preventable through proper response, including the administration of naloxone, notifying emergency medical services, and providing linkages to recovery support services. However, the lack of protection for bystanders in Kansas by way of a Good Samaritan Law (GSL) prevents people from calling 911 in the event of an overdose. 80% of naloxone is administered by a person who uses drugs; often, people who use drugs administer naloxone but do not call 911 due to fear of arrest. Overdose prevention doesn't simply save lives; by offering a person who uses drugs compassion and support, it is proven that they are 5 times more likely to enter treatment and 3 times more likely to seek and sustain recovery from substance use disorder.

ASAM, the American Society of Addiction Medicine, notes that "rates of witnesses of overdoses making calls are often very low, between 10 and 30 percent." 48 states have addressed this reality and prioritized saving lives from a preventable death by strengthening their GSL. As experts in this field, we hope public policy follows best practice to save lives; strengthening the GSL to protect bystanders responding to an overdose emergency is a good next step in the State's response to this overdose crisis.

We want Kansans to feel empowered to provide life-saving assistance to friends, family members, neighbors and co-workers. We want agencies to feel empowered to build more robust overdose prevention programs in the State without fear of reprisal or liability for their staff and the people they serve.