



Minnesota Society of Addiction Medicine

A Chapter of American Society of Addiction Medicine

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February 25, 2021

The Honorable Carlos Mariani
Chair, House Committee on Public Safety and
Criminal Justice Reform Finance and Policy Division
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
State Office Building, Room 479
St. Paul, MN 55155-1232

Re: Support for HF928

Dear Chairperson Mariani,

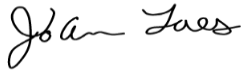
On behalf of the Minnesota Society of Addiction Medicine (MNSAM), the medical specialty society representing physicians and clinicians in Minnesota who specialize in the prevention and treatment of addiction, we would like to take this opportunity to provide our support for HF928, which would legalize fentanyl testing strips and allow syringe service providers to provide clients with hypodermic syringes and needles. With opioid-involved deaths in Minnesota increasing, likely due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic,ⁱ it is vital that Minnesotans have access to high-quality and evidence-based harm reduction services.

Fentanyl testing strips are informative, inexpensive tests that can be utilized by drug users to test for the presence of fentanyl in their drugs.ⁱⁱ These tests are associated with positive changes in drug use behaviorⁱⁱⁱ and positive changes in overdose behavior, indicating that they have the potential to prevent overdoses and save lives.^{iv} I have personally witnessed the fear patients express when they find that fentanyl is in their drug supply. This improved knowledge changes behaviors and improves motivation for treatment.

Similarly, syringe service providers improve the public health by mitigating the spread of HCV and HIV in the population.^v Furthermore, they serve as a point of contact to bring individuals with addiction into treatment. Patients contracting infectious diseases via IV drug use with used needles often spend 6-8 weeks in the hospital receiving IV antibiotic treatment – a cost that is often covered by our excellent Medicaid system, and can be prevented by these programs. By empowering syringe service providers to better serve their clients, and facilitating the widespread use of fentanyl testing strips, this legislation will improve the harm reduction capabilities of organizations across Minnesota.

MNSAM shares the state of Minnesota's goal of mitigating the harms of drug use through a sufficiently funded and supported harm reduction response. We thank you for considering HF928 and offer our support for its passage. Please do not hesitate to contact MNSAM's president, Dr. JoAn Laes at (612) 873-3258 or joAn.laes@hcmcd.org, if MNSAM can be of service to you.

Sincerely,



JoAn Laes, MD, FACMT, FASAM
President, Minnesota Society of Addiction Medicine

CC:

The Honorable Cedrick Frazier
The Honorable Brian Johnson
The Honorable Heather Edelson
The Honorable Sandra Feist
The Honorable Athena Hollins
The Honorable John Huot
The Honorable Ginny Klevorn
The Honorable Jamie Long
The Honorable Rena Moran
The Honorable Dave Pinto
The Honorable Samantha Vang
The Honorable Jay Xiong
The Honorable Matt Grossell
The Honorable Patty Mueller
The Honorable Paul Novotny
The Honorable Marion O'Neill
The Honorable John Poston
The Honorable Donald Raleigh

ⁱ American Medical Association. (2020). "Issue brief: Reports of increases in opioid- and other drug-related overdose and other concerns during COVID pandemic." Available at: <https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/2020-12/issue-brief-increases-in-opioid-related-overdose.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Sherman, S.G., Park, J.N., Glick, J., McKenzie, M., Morales, K., Christensen, T., Green, T.C. (2018) FORECAST Study Summary Report. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Available at: <https://americanhealth.jhu.edu/fentanyl/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Krieger, M., Goedel, W., Buxton, J., Lysyshyn, M., Bernstein, E., Sherman, S., , Rich, J., Hadland, S., Green, T., Marshall, B. (2018). Use of rapid fentanyl test strips among young adults who use drugs. International Journal of Drug Policy, Volume 61, Pages 52-58. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0955395918302469><https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0955395918302469>

^{iv} Peiper, N., Clarke, S.D., Vincent, L., Ciccarone, D., Kral, A., Zibbell, J. (2019). Fentanyl test strips as an opioid overdose prevention strategy: Findings from a syringe services program in the Southeastern United States. International Journal of Drug Policy, Volume 63, Pages 122-128. Available at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0955395918302135>

^v Volkow, N. (2016). Syringe-Exchange Programs Are Part of Effective HIV Prevention. National Institute for Drug Abuse. Available at: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/about-nida/noras-blog/2016/12/syringe-exchange-programs-are-part-effective-hiv-prevention>