



United Community Services of Johnson County

Written-Only Testimony in Support of House Bill 2487

Kristy Baughman, Executive Director of United Community Services of Johnson County

Date: January 25, 2024

Kristy Baughman, Executive Director

United Community Services of Johnson County, Inc.

9001 W. 110th St., Ste 100

Overland Park, KS 66210

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

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

United Community Services of Johnson County (UCS) is a nonprofit agency that provides data analysis, leads collaborative planning, and mobilizes resources to enhance the availability and delivery of health and human services in Johnson County and the surrounding region. UCS also convenes the Drug and Alcoholism Council of Johnson County and administers the Substance Use Continuum of Care Fund, which uses pooled special alcohol tax funds and opioid settlement funds from eleven cities and Johnson County to provide competitive grant funding to agencies that provide substance use and co-occurring substance use and mental health education, prevention, intervention, treatment, recovery, and reintegration programs. In this role, UCS leads a regional needs assessment for the substance use continuum of care every three to five years.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), since 1999, over one million Americans have died of a drug overdose; nearly 75% of drug overdose deaths since 2020 are attributed to opioids. Opioids are highly addictive and relatively inexpensive to produce, as a result, increasingly they are laced into other illegal drugs and pressed into counterfeit pills that look like prescription drugs. For example, the prevalence of fentanyl, a common opioid, as tested by the Johnson County crime lab has gone from the eighteenth most common substance in 2018 to one of the top *three* substances in 2022. [From 2011-2020, Kansas overdose deaths increased by 73.5%.](#)

Medical assistance, such as the administration of naloxone, can reverse an opioid overdose, saving lives. However, individuals experiencing overdose and witnesses to an overdose may be reluctant to call for emergency assistance due to the possibility of prosecution for a drug-related crime. To support life-saving interventions, 48 states and D.C. have passed “Good Samaritan Laws” that allow individuals to call for help without fear of arrest or prosecution.* Kansas is one of only two states that has not.

House Bill 2487 provides a narrow carve out of immunity for seeking or providing medical assistance when it is reasonably believed that an individual needs medical assistance as the result of the use of a controlled substance and that individual remains on scene and cooperates with emergency services and law enforcement. **While a broader immunity, for example: not requiring a caller to remain on scene or not requiring cooperation with law enforcement in order to preserve immunity, would be more likely to result in individuals calling for medical care when it is needed, UCS is supportive of the bipartisan effort represented by House Bill 2487 to address this gap in existing law.**

*See The Network for Public Health Law, *Legal Interventions to Reduce Overdose Mortality: Overdose Good Samaritan Laws*, available at: <https://www.networkforphl.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/2021-50-State-Survey-Legal-Interventions-to-Reduce-Overdose-Mortality-Overdose-Good-Samaritan-Laws-8-18.pdf>.

Board Members

Robin Rollins Harrold,

President

Dr. Putul Allen, MD

Hon. Jenifer Ashford

Rev. Cheryl Jefferson Bell

David Brown

Joe Connor

Erik Erazo

Thomas Herzog

Stephen Kyle

Patty Markley

Dr. L. Michael McCloud, PhD

Hon. Eric Mikkelson

Rogeana Patterson-King

Jeff Short

Nolan Sunderman

Hon. Donald Roberts

Vicki Webster

Vanessa Vaughn West

Dave White

Council of Advisors

Mary Birch

Dr. Andy Bowne

Pat Colloton

Dr. Stuart Day

Hon. Peggy Dunn

Jeff Ellis

SuEllen Fried

Ellen Hanson

Terrie Huntington

Audrey Langworthy

Hon. Mike Kelly

Penny Postoak Ferguson

Jill Quigley

Tom Robinett

Clint Robinson

Carol Sader

Brad Stratton

Charlie Sunderland

Hon. Stephen Tatum

David Warm

Executive Director

Kristy Baughman