



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2576		DATE: 2/22/2024	
COMMITTEE: Crime Prevention and Public Safety			
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: ARNIE C. "HONEST-ABE" DIENOFF-STATE PUBLIC ADVOCAT		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: arniedienoff@yahoo.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/22/2024 10:31 AM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

I am in Support of this Bill and its targeted intension. The Goal is to hold Drug Dealers Accountable and Responsible for harming Missourians. We NEED to rid our State of these awful drugs with State Task Forces, Enforcement, Prosecution, Education and Prevention Programs. This MUST be a high-priority of our State. Drugs have an adverse effect on Missourians Quality of Life, Crime in Neighborhoods and Communities across our Great State of Missouri. This MUST be a Legislative Priority to do whatever the General Assembly can do to crack down and rid our State of these demeaning and terrible drugs that destroy Lives, Families and Communities.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: BYRON KEELIN		PHONE NUMBER: 314-402-0655	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: FREEDOM PRINCIPLE MO		TITLE: PRESIDENT	
ADDRESS: PO BOX 15095			
CITY: ST. LOUIS		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63110
EMAIL: freedomprinciplestl@protonmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/22/2024 6:34 AM

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We strongly support this. With the invasion at the border, communities are being flooded with fentanyl and other illegal drugs. In particular, these drugs are impacting our inner-city communities. The trafficking of drugs leads not only to overdose deaths but leads to additional gun violence. We must take a strong stance on drug trafficking.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: LOCKE THOMPSON		PHONE NUMBER: 573-634-9180	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MISSOURI ASSOCIATION OF PROSECUTING ATTORNEYS		TITLE: COLE COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY	
ADDRESS: 311 E. HIGH ST. #300			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65101
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/22/2024 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: GRACE IVERSON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: grace.tedder97@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/21/2024 2:58 PM
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I ask the committee to not pass this bill. While it may seem intuitive that further criminalizing substances like fentanyl would lead to less drugs on the street and thus healthier and safer communities, historically we have seen the opposite to be true - the drugs just get more potent and dangerous. My concern is that by criminalizing smaller amounts of fentanyl, people would be less likely to call for help in the event of an overdose or other emergency for fear of higher criminal charges associated with smaller amounts of illicit drugs than before. I urge the committee to NOT pass HB2576 and instead work on legislation that we know is effective in making our communities safer, like increasing access to treatment and recovery resources.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KELLY GABLE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: kngable@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/21/2024 10:40 PM
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There needs to be clarification on how drug doses in this bill were established. They seem very arbitrary and subject to rapid changes based on the drug supply market. Is there data to support that a felony charge reduces future drug distribution? There IS data to support the negative community impact of drug-related felony charges on future accessibility to sustainable housing and employment. Research supports funding community-based programs that increase equitable access to safe schooling, work, and social/faith-based entities. Criminalizing the distribution of specific street derived substances overlooks the real public health crisis of addiction and inequitable access to recovery resources. I believe that this bill will cause more harm, with the intent to give the public a false sense of enhanced public safety.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: LAUREN GREEN		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: Lauren.M.Mackay@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/21/2024 4:24 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

I'm writing to express my opposition to HB2756. This bill seeks to address the danger of the illicit drug supply and make our communities safer and healthier, which is a goal that we all share. However, HB2756 tries to accomplish this through increased criminalization, which will have the opposite of its intended effect, as we have seen via decades of research and experience. Most notably, HB2756 could impact the current Good Samaritan Law, which protects individuals experiencing an overdose and those who call 911 for help. By significantly decreasing the amount of fentanyl that falls under first degree trafficking, more individuals would be implicated in manufacture or distribution of controlled substances (which are not protected under the Good Samaritan Law) rather than possession (which is protected). In general, increased criminalization will likely lead to more fear and an unwillingness to call for help, undermining years of work to build trust between communities and first responders, reduce body dumping, and prevent fatal overdose. I am also concerned that further criminalizing smaller amounts of fentanyl and its analogues would add additional burden to our already over-capacity policing and judicial systems, while worsening public safety and community health outcomes. Such a drastic change to the amounts of fentanyl required for various trafficking charges could result in a much larger workload for these systems, diverting attention away from other crucial community issues. Finally, harsher penalties against illicit substances have consistently led to a more deadly drug supply rather than the desired effect of driving down substance use or crime. For example, stricter criminalization of heroin pushed the illicit market to fentanyl, which is far more potent, meaning smaller, less easily detectable amounts could be transported and sold in order to avoid criminalization. This more potent substance led to a massive increase in overdose and overdose death. Further criminalizing fentanyl and its analogues is likely to have the same effect - like any market, the products will evolve alongside the legal environment, which will consistently set-back efforts of our law enforcement, criminal justice system, healthcare and social service providers. I urge you to vote no on HB2756.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: NATHANIAL NOLAN		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: nolan.nathan@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/22/2024 9:25 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

My name is Nathaniel Nolan and I am an HIV and infectious disease physician in St. Louis, MO. I am also the founder and director of Street Med STL, a non-profit organization that provides care to unhoused people living on the streets of St. Louis. Since 2020, I have been making rounds to unhoused people in St. Louis, many of whom are deeply affected by the opioid and methamphetamine crises. In my clinical practice, I also care for many people who are struggling with addiction and its consequences. I write not only as a medical expert, but as someone who spends a significant amount of time working directly with the population most impacted by this legislation. I write in opposition to HB2576, which seeks to create a law increasing penalties for those who distribute controlled substances. While I agree in spirit that we, as citizens of Missouri, should do everything in our power to curb the crisis of drug use in our communities, laws that seek to criminalize substance use have a long history of undermining public health efforts. Laws that criminalize substance use drive people away from potential avenues of treatment. These laws have the unintended consequence of prohibiting people from calling emergency medical services in healthcare crises, like overdoses. And they potentially penalize friends and family who are trying to help their loved ones in the only way they know how. Other states have written harsh laws that criminalize substance use and distribution. This has resulted in cases where people who call 911 for an overdose are charged with felonies, which disincentivizes individuals from seeking medical care and drives up fatal overdose episodes. If I were to give a relevant, and real-world example, an individual who buys fentanyl to use with a friend instantly becomes liable in the event of an overdose, which means they now have to think twice before calling 911 which at best delays life saving care and at worse results in fatality. In states where these laws are enacted, it is rarely large distributors (aka "dealers") that are penalized. Rather, individuals that buy (or sell) in relatively small quantities, frequently to support their addiction, are now faced with increased risk of encounters with the criminal-legal system, which costs tax-payer money, hurts those struggling with addiction, frequently puts them into a cycle of interactions with the criminal legal system and inhibits their ability to seek meaningful addiction treatment. In short, these policies cost taxpayers money, rarely improve outcomes for those who use drugs, and do little to curb overdose deaths. I am appreciative of the time and attention these issues are receiving in our state legislatures. We are fortunate to have thoughtful individuals working hard to enact policies that might improve care for those who use drugs. I unfortunately think this is a misguided policy that will not improve meaningful outcomes, like reducing overdose deaths or increasing access to care for substance use disorders.

Sincerely, Nathaniel Nolan, MD MPH MHPE



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: RACHEL WINOGRAD		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: rpwinograd@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/21/2024 6:30 PM
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Increasing criminal penalties for behaviors of drug use or selling will not have the effect of reducing drug use or overdose in Missouri, but will instead lead to more deaths, as well as more people filling our jails and prisons. Even though fentanyl and carfentanil are powerful and scary, we know from decades of policy examination and rigorous research that adding stricter penalties to any type of drug use or selling does not work to deter these behaviors. If anything, it just makes it less likely people will call 911 for help when there is an overdose, because they fear being caught and charged with drug possession or selling. This is why Missouri legislators thankfully passed our 911 Good Samaritan Law a few years ago - so people could call 911 in the event of an overdose without worrying they would get in trouble for drugs. Passing this bill could undermine that important and life-saving legislation. Additionally, going to jail or prison itself increases one's risk for fatal overdose. In their first month following release, individuals are 128 times more likely to die of an overdose than the general population. For those who do not die, they will carry charges on their record that could prevent them from gaining meaningful employment or housing that could help them turn their lives around. Lastly, we must acknowledge that, given how toxic and unpredictable our drug supply is, many people do not know what drugs they are consuming, sharing, or selling! Punishing individual friends, girlfriends, boyfriends, neighbors, and other people who use drugs and may happen to share them or sell them to a peer will not help solve our overdose crisis, it will make it worse through ineffective punishment, isolation, and fear. Even if we think this will "only punish real drug dealers," we must acknowledge that is not a clean and clear group of people -- most people who sell drugs also use drugs and have their own addictions. Plus, if we arrest and incarcerate one low-level drug dealer, they are replaced that same day by someone else to do that job. This simply will not serve as a deterrent in that market. Please, if you truly care about saving lives from drug overdose, do not support this bill. There are more effective, humane, and evidence based strategies we should be pursuing than increasing criminalization... We've tried this as a country for over 50 years, and we know it does not work.