

**Support HB25-1293 Drug Overdose Education
& Opioid Antagonists in Schools
Anne Frank, MD, FAAP
March 20, 2025**

Honorable Chair and members of the committee: My name is Dr. Anne Frank. I am here on behalf of myself and the American Academy of Pediatrics, Colorado Chapter. Thank you for the opportunity to offer my strong support for HB25-1293 Drug Overdose Education & Opioid Antagonists in Schools. I am an internist and pediatrician and have cared for children and young adults in Colorado for the last 12 years including children and young adults who have received lifesaving naloxone.

In 2022, overdose deaths were the third leading cause of death in children. In review of the New England Journal of Medicine Article The Overdose Crisis in US Adolescents, overdoses started to rise in 2019, despite overall drug use continuing to decline among teenagers. At least 75% of these overdoses involved fentanyl, which is increasingly pressed into pill form to resemble common prescription medications like benzodiazepines and oxycodone. About 5% of 12th graders report having taken a pill not prescribed to them, and these are commonly not students with substance use disorders, who would potentially get drug education elsewhere.

In my office, I have seen children from 9 months to 19 years who have received life saving naloxone. When I talk with youth and their family members about how to keep themselves safe, they are almost always surprised to know that fentanyl can come in pill form, that you can test for the presence of fentanyl, and that there is a medicine to reverse an accidental overdose. They are generally receptive to all of this information and prescription for free naloxone. More effective than one by one conversations with children and families in my office, is a school based educational intervention and widespread access to naloxone.

Just like we advocate for AEDs in public settings, access to naloxone in school is lifesaving and addresses the third leading cause of death in children. Please vote in support of HB25-1293 and thank you.

<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2312084>

The Overdose Crisis among U.S. Adolescents

Authors: Joseph Friedman, Ph.D., M.P.H., and Scott E. Hadland, M.D., M.P.H.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3189-6199> Author Info & Affiliations

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School-Based Approach to Opioid Overdose Prevention [Jessica B Calihan](#)^{1,✉}, [Brittany L Carney](#)¹, [Deb M Schmill](#)¹, [Sarah M Bagley](#)¹

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Testimony in Support of HB25-1293
Mollie Lesser, MD
March 20, 2025

Good afternoon. My name is Dr. Mollie Lesser. I am a pediatric neurologist in Denver. I am testifying on behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Colorado Chapter and our nearly 800 members across the state. Because we know Naloxone saves lives, we urge your support of HB25-1293 for the provision of Drug Overdose Education & Opioid Antagonists in Schools.

In my first month working as a physician in Denver, I cared for multiple teenage patients affected by opioid overdose. It was emotionally difficult in spite of my medical school training. In my first week, one of my patients died from an unintentional fentanyl overdose due to the lacing of what was thought to be a marijuana product. My patient was found by their friend, also a teenager, who brought them in for care. As a pediatric neurologist, part of my job is talking to loved ones about the severe brain injury, poor prognosis, and even death of a patient. Preventable deaths, especially of youth, are the hardest to stomach. I vividly remember the smallest details of this situation, which room this patient was in, that their friend found them on their porch, and their mother's gut-wrenching wail echoing into the hallway. I believe my patient's death could have been prevented by a simple, yet effective, FDA-approved medication called Naloxone, also known as Narcan, and more teenagers knowing how to use this simple life-saving medication. This is why this bill is so important.

As a member of the Denver community, not just because I am a doctor, I carry Naloxone with me, in the chance that I could save someone's life outside of the hospital. It comes in a prefilled, needle-free, device that is easily sprayed into a nostril. It looks like an over the counter allergy nose spray and even fits easily into my bag or pocket. If administered during an opioid overdose, Naloxone can be life-saving, reversing respiratory depression. Equally important, if administered and a person has not taken opioids, Naloxone is safe and does not have an effect.

Thank you to the bill sponsors for bringing forth this important piece of legislation. On behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Colorado Chapter, we ask that you please support House Bill HB25-1293 as it will greatly benefit teenagers across Colorado. We know opioids are out there in the community, let us help prevent as many hospitalizations, neurologic sequelae, and accidental deaths as possible.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill CO HB25-1293

Addressing the Tragic Impact of Fentanyl on Children

To the esteemed members of the Senate,

I am here to present a testimony in strong support of Senate Bill CO HB25-1293. This bill is a crucial step towards addressing the devastating impact of fentanyl on our children and communities. The Maddie Wright Foundation, dedicated to the prevention of drug abuse and the support of affected families, has been at the forefront of outreach efforts to combat this epidemic.

My daughter, Madeline, a third generation Colorado native employed at Le Meridian downtown and on a fully scholarship with Denver School of botanicals abruptly died at age 23 from a pill she thought was oxycodone --but was pure fentanyl in 2020. The outcry from myself, her friends, family, and everyone after finding out "Why weren't we informed of the risk?" Education is critical. We have educated thousands since Madeline's tragic life was cut short and we continually hear feedback. "We never knew about this? Why isn't this in the news? Why isn't this part of mandatory curriculum? Please keep sharing your message."

Colorado fentanyl deaths continue to increase where other states decline. Mandatory education is already mandated in many states. Fentanyl poisoning is the leading cause of death for ages 5-45.

Outreach Efforts by the Maddie Wright Foundation

The Maddie Wright Foundation has engaged in numerous initiatives to raise awareness about the dangers of fentanyl and provide support to families affected by this lethal substance. Some of our key outreach efforts include:

- Educational programs in schools to inform students about the risks associated with drug use, particularly fentanyl.
- Community workshops and seminars to equip parents and caregivers with the knowledge and tools to protect their children.
- Collaboration with local healthcare providers to offer resources and support to families dealing with addiction and overdose.
- Advocacy campaigns to push for stronger regulations and policies to curb the spread of fentanyl in our communities.

Statistics on Children Dying from Fentanyl

The alarming increase in fentanyl-related fatalities among children is a stark reminder of the urgent need for action. Here are some key statistics that highlight the severity of this crisis:

- In the past year alone, there has been a 30% rise in the number of children dying from fentanyl overdoses nationwide.

- Fentanyl is now responsible for more than 60% of all drug-related deaths among individuals aged 18 and younger across the country.
- Emergency room visits for fentanyl overdoses among children have doubled within the last three years.
- Approximately 40% of fentanyl-related fatalities involve children who were unaware they were ingesting the substance.
- In Colorado, there have been over 100 fentanyl-related deaths among children ages 5-18 in the last year.

These figures are not just numbers; they represent the lives of innocent children lost to this insidious drug. The passage of Senate Bill CO HB25-1293 is essential to implement measures that can prevent further tragedies and protect our future generations.

In conclusion, I urge the Senate to consider the critical importance of this bill and to take decisive action in support of Senate Bill CO HB25-1293. The Maddie Wright Foundation and countless families affected by fentanyl are counting on your leadership to make a difference.

Thank you for your attention and commitment to this vital cause.

Sincerely,

Julie Wright – A Colorado mother who's only child is now gone forever from the decision to take one pill she thought was oxy.

Executive Director of Maddie Wright Foundation

Maddie Wright Foundation

Phone (303) 444-3332