

March 5, 2022

Public Safety Committee,

I am writing in regards to the HF883 Bill (Drug Paraphernalia Definition Modification) and the experience we have had with recent substance testing initiatives.

Overdose rates were exacerbated by the COVID pandemic coupled with the increase in adulterated substances. Fentanyl is killing more Minnesotans than ever before. Statistically the number one way someone between 18-45 will die is from an overdose. As this epidemic continues to evolve and change, so must our work and initiatives in prevention.

The Steve Rummler HOPE Network has been at the forefront of overdose prevention and awareness in Minnesota. There was a time when Naloxone was not talked about, used or widely distributed due to stigma and lack of education. Thankfully, Minnesota has grown and now we know naloxone to be a life saving essential. Fentanyl Testing Strips were finally legalized on July 1, 2021. SRHN quickly jumped into action and built out an extensive distribution all around the state. Since September of 2021, we have distributed over 30,000 strips to recovery organizations, shelters, police departments, hospitals, churches, and just about every group you can imagine. Part of this new initiative included an anonymous QR code where we ask about the user experience after testing their substance. We have learned that most people find there is Fentanyl present in their substance, and more often they are testing what they believe to not even be an opioid. Some of the responses included the way the test changed their behavior by saying:

“I used in another group or with another person”

“I made sure naloxone was around”

“I decided to smoke instead of inject”

“I stopped buying from this person”

If these simple tools can change behavior and initiate safe use, then imagine what other overdose prevention supplies we aren't utilizing by not passing the HF833 Bill to even allow it? Let's be open to the possibilities of the advancements to overdose prevention and not shut it out while lives are being lost.

Sincerely,



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Executive Director

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