
Testimony by Caleb Banta-Green, PhD, MPH, MSW

UW ADAI Center for Community-Engaged Drug Education, Epidemiology & Research

February 13, 2025

Washington State Legislature House Community Safety Committee

Chair Goodman and Members of the Committee:

I'm Caleb Banta-Green, a Research Professor at the University of Washington School of Medicine's Addictions, Drug & Alcohol Institute.

I am testifying in support of HB 1574.

I am an appointed member of Washington's Substance Use Recovery Services Advisory Committee; this committee's Recommendation #5 aligns with three parts of this bill¹.

First, this bill clarifies that people who are using community drug checking services are "acting legally and are exempt from arrest and prosecution" thereby extending protections already provided to program staff. I currently oversee an HCA contract to support 6 drug checking programs, which last year tested more than 2,000 samples across the state. These data have provided critical information about the rapidly changing drug supply for program participants, local communities, medical providers, and first responders. We want to *encourage* participation in drug checking.

Second, this bill clarifies the types of locations that are able to provide supplies to reduce the harms from drugs to include "health care facilities, including hospitals". UW Medicine providers are among those who want to provide these health supplies to their patients.

Third, this bill removes language allowing local jurisdictions to prohibit health services that reduce drug related infectious diseases, wounds, and fatal overdoses. These services have been repeatedly shown to improve the health of people who use drugs and not lead to increases in drug use.

Lastly, this bill supports bystanders calling 911 during an overdose by expanding the protections of our Good Samaritan Overdose Law. Overdoses are a leading cause of accidental death, and most can be prevented with quick intervention. Fear of arrest can be a substantial barrier to seeking help. Washington was the second state to pass a

Good Sam law back in 2010, in the interim 47 states have caught up and many have surpassed us in the protections these laws provideⁱⁱ. More calls means more lives saved. Our state is a leader in providing health promoting and lifesaving care to people who use drugs. This bill supports more people engaging in more services and will improve the health and safety of our neighbors and our communities.

ⁱ <https://www.hca.wa.gov/assets/sursac-plan-recommendation-five.pdf>

ⁱⁱ https://www.networkforphl.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Legal-Interventions-to-Reduce-Overdose-Mortality_Overdose-Good-Samaritan-Laws.pdf

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