

Thomas E. Kottke, MD, MSPH testimony to the Minnesota Legislature March 24, 2025

Members of the committee, members of the public. I am Thomas Kottke. I live at 571 Otis Avenue in Saint Paul, District 64A, and have practiced cardiology for 40 years at the University of Minnesota, Mayo Clinic Rochester, and HealthPartners until I retired in December 2024. During that time, I have also advocated for measures that improve community health because it is in this space that the greatest gains in health and well-being for individuals can be made, and a prosperous Minnesota depends on a healthy Minnesota.

Today I would like to address the student proposal to add eight words as suggested in Senate File 2234.

Those words follow the words "substance abuse education" and add "that includes overdose recognition, prevention, and response education."

The latest Minnesota mortality statistics support the addition of this text. In the age 10-14 group, the total death rate is 16 per 100,000 and the rate of accidental poisoning is 1 per 100,000. Note that "accidental poisoning" is the medical term for death from overdose. By ages 20-34 the total death rate has increased 8-fold to 129 per hundred thousand and 32% of all deaths are from accidental poisoning. The rate of accidental poisoning has increased 40-fold. It shouldn't be this way. These are people in their prime of life. They should be in the labor force, not in the ground.

When an individual suffers an overdose, I believe that it is rarely in the presence of a physician, a fire fighter, a police officer, or another individual trained in overdose treatment. It is in the presence of peers and friends who could help if they had the knowledge and the tools. Today the students are telling you that they want to help, and you can help them help by adding the text that will cause them to be trained in overdose recognition, prevention, and response.

Thank you very much for your time. I appreciate your commitment to the people of Minnesota.

