



January 19, 2024

The Honorable Patrick Hope
Chair
House Health and Human Services – Health Committee
Virginia General Assembly
Richmond, VA

Dear Chair Hope and Health Committee Members:

The National Safety Council (NSC) urges your support of HB 342, which would require state buildings to have opioid overdose reversal medications on site and train state employees on its use. The bill would also encourage private employers to stock opioid overdose reversal medications and train employees on its use. Opioid overdose reversal medications are an essential component of first aid and can prevent death from both prescription opioids and illicit opioids, such as fentanyl.

NSC is America's leading nonprofit safety advocate and has been for 110 years. As a mission-based organization, we work to eliminate the leading causes of preventable death and injury, focusing our efforts on the workplace and roadway. We create a culture of safety to keep people safer in the workplace and beyond so they can live their fullest lives. Our more than 13,000 member companies and federal agencies represent employees at nearly 41,000 U.S. worksites, including over 400 members in Virginia.

According to provisional data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 83,000 people died of an opioid overdose in 2022 including over 2,000 deaths in Virginia.¹² Almost 80% of all drug overdoses in Virginia included the synthetic opioid fentanyl or a fentanyl analog.³ No industry or occupation is immune to the overdose crisis as workplace overdose deaths have increased over 600% since 2011.⁴ Nationally, overdoses now account for nearly 1 in 10 worker deaths on the job.⁵

Opioid overdose reversal medications, such as naloxone, are safe, effective, and can save a life.⁶ The medication does not affect anyone experiencing a medical event other than an opioid overdose if administered to them.⁷ In March 2023, the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the first over-the-counter (OTC) naloxone nasal spray.⁸ Four months later, the FDA approved a second OTC naloxone nasal spray for commercial purchase. The adoption of OTC status for naloxone nasal sprays gives the people of Virginia a useful tool to combat the growing threat of opioid overdoses and should be more widely deployed.

¹ <https://blogs.cdc.gov/nchs/2023/05/18/7365/>

² <https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?241+ful+HJ41+pdf>

³ Ibid.

⁴ <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/work/safety-topics/overdose-deaths/>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ <https://www.cdc.gov/stopoverdose/naloxone/index.html>

⁷ Wermeling, D.P., *Review of naloxone safety for opioid overdose: practical considerations for new technology and expanded public access*. Therapeutic Advances in Drug Safety, 2015. 6(1): p. 20-31.

⁸ <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-approves-first-over-counter-naloxone-nasal-spray>

HB 342 allows the Commonwealth to be a leader in providing these lifesaving medications in your facilities. This is a move the federal government has already taken.⁹ Employers play an important role to reducing the stigma surrounding opioid overdoses by creating occupational naloxone programs to ensure the public, including employees, stay alive amidst this growing threat.

HB 342, which prioritizes opioid overdose reversal medications in workplaces, will help keep Virginians alive on the job and create a new troop of people trained to recognize and respond to an opioid overdose anywhere. I hope you will join me in support of this lifesaving legislation. If you have any questions, or if NSC can be of further assistance on this issue, please contact State Government Affairs Manager Alaina Dahlquist at Alaina.Dahlquist@nsc.org or 771-333-0677.

Sincerely,



Lorraine M. Martin
President and CEO

⁹ <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/12/22/2023-28207/guidelines-for-safety-station-programs-in-federal-facilities>