



Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County, TN

Legislation Text

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A resolution in support of life-saving responses to the recent escalating overdoses largely caused by the widespread availability of synthetic, illicit drugs.

WHEREAS, saving lives for those actively living with substance use disorder is a high priority. This requires that Public Health and Public Safety agencies must coordinate efforts in meaningful and immediate ways that strengthen crisis response and rapid referral for individuals exposed to synthetic drugs, such as fentanyl, a lethal and illicit opioid that is now found in all illicit drugs in Davidson County; and

WHEREAS, substance use disorders occur when the recurrent use of alcohol and/or prescription or illicit drugs causes clinically significant impairment, including impairment of judgement, health problems, disability, and failure to meet major responsibilities at work, school, or home; and,

WHEREAS, substance use disorder and mental health are not separate issues: in fact, addiction is a mental health diagnosis and must be treated as such. Drug use and/or addiction can occur at the same time an individual is attempting to manage a chronic or episodic mental health condition. Addiction as a mental health diagnosis and condition is often misunderstood and stigmatized, increasing the risk of relapse or overdose; and,

WHEREAS, Davidson County had over 700 fatal overdoses in 2021. Fentanyl was involved in nearly 75% of those fatalities; and

WHEREAS, law enforcement continues to see high levels of trafficking of fentanyl, synthetic opioids, methamphetamine, cocaine, and synthetic stimulants which are expected to drive both fatal and non-fatal overdoses over the next few years; and,

WHEREAS, law enforcement has documented that these drugs can be mistaken for legitimate prescription medications; and

WHEREAS, the wide-spread presence of synthetic opioids, like fentanyl, defines a much more dangerous environment for Davidson County residents and demonstrates that the issue is no longer the "Opioid Crisis" of a few years ago. For example, fentanyl, a synthetic opioid is 50 to 100 times stronger than morphine; and

WHEREAS, the first responder system, linkage to treatment, and treatment services themselves were not built to address this crisis; and

WHEREAS, like all public health emergencies, Davidson County must prioritize response with the limited resources available to support first responders, immediate connections to care and life-saving interventions, while at the same time ensuring that the Metro Public Health Department has the resources to support data-to-action approaches that integrate with mental health treatment and care and reflect the needs of different demographic groups; and

WHEREAS, non-fatal and fatal overdoses are highly traumatic for families, communities, and even workplaces. Non-fatal and fatal overdose response is both financially and emotionally taxing for Davidson County residents, first responders, emergency departments, medical examiners, public health agencies, treatment centers, and others that are deeply impacted by this issue.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY:

Section 1. The Metropolitan County Council hereby goes on record as supporting life-saving responses to overdoses largely attributed to the widespread availability of synthetic, illicit drugs.

Section 2. The Metropolitan County Council further goes on record as supporting the alignment of life-saving connections to care with national public health emergencies declared by the current and former U.S. Presidents.

Section 3. The Metropolitan County Council further goes on record as supporting efforts to engage knowledgeable stakeholders to identify immediate points of action to reduce fatal and non-fatal overdoses, address data barriers to help those most at risk for overdose, promote evidenced-based approaches to keeping individuals with a substance use disorder alive through rapid referral to detox and medically assisted treatment, as well as other proven methods of mental health treatment that support recovery so that our diverse communities can be resilient in the face of wide-spread availability of synthetic drugs.

Section 4. This Resolution shall take effect from and after its adoption, the welfare of the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring it.