



THE CITY OF PITTSBURGH

EXECUTIVE ORDER

ON FENTANYL TEST STRIPS FOR OVERDOSE AWARENESS DAY

WHEREAS, opioid use disorder is a leading cause of preventable death in the United States and has caused significant mortality and morbidity in the City of Pittsburgh; and,

WHEREAS, the regional rate of overdose deaths has accelerated faster than national averages with Allegheny County suffering a 16% increase in deaths from 2018 to 2019, outpacing the 5% increase across the United States in the same year. Furthermore, from 2019 to 2020, Allegheny County overdose deaths increased an additional 22%; and,

WHEREAS, the rate of overdose mortality for Black residents of Allegheny County is significantly higher than that of White residents, thereby deepening racial inequity; and,

WHEREAS, Black men experienced a 200% increase in overdose deaths from Quarter 3 of 2019-Quarter 2 of 2020 compared with the data from Quarter 3 of 2018-Quarter 2 of 2019; and,

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced people into isolation, causing individuals to use drugs alone, in larger amounts, and with increased frequency; and,

WHEREAS, the pandemic has exacerbated mental health conditions and economic stressors which are common risk factors for unsafe opioid use; and,

WHEREAS, fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid that can quickly cause respiratory depression and is often mixed with substances to increase euphoric effects; and,

WHEREAS, fentanyl can be mixed with many types of substances and is especially dangerous when the individual using drugs does not realize that fentanyl may be present as an additive; and,

WHEREAS, fentanyl was present in 77% of Allegheny County overdose deaths in 2020 and is increasingly present in the drug supply; and,

WHEREAS, fentanyl test strips can identify the presence of fentanyl in unregulated drugs. These tools are able to test injectable drugs, powders, and pills. Awareness of fentanyl allows individuals to implement appropriate harm reduction strategies to reduce the risk of an overdose; and,

WHEREAS, policies influenced by the stigmatization of drug use have restricted the ability of healthcare providers, outreach organizations, and municipal governments to address the opioid overdose crisis by limiting available tools that reduce harm associated with drug use; and,

WHEREAS, fentanyl test strips have been proven to prevent opioid overdoses and save lives; and,

WHEREAS, in April 2021, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention has announced a policy of encouraging the use of federal grant funds for the purchase and distribution of fentanyl test strips to help combat the increase in drug overdoses; and,

WHEREAS, a report commissioned by the Pennsylvania Auditor General assessing fentanyl's impact on the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania cited fentanyl test strips as a "key prevention tool" and recommended their legalization; and,

WHEREAS, the Allegheny County District Attorney and the Pennsylvania Attorney General have announced that their offices are declining to prosecute the possession of fentanyl test strips for harm reduction purposes; and,

WHEREAS, for these reasons, the City of Pittsburgh wishes to adopt a policy of not arresting individuals for the possession or distribution of fentanyl test strips, reduce the stigma associated with them, and educate the public on the benefits of these lifesaving tools.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, William Peduto, Mayor of the City of Pittsburgh, by the virtue of the authority vested in me by the City Charter and laws of the City of Pittsburgh do hereby direct the following actions:

- 1) The Director of the Department of Public Safety and the Chief of the City of Pittsburgh Bureau of Police or their designees shall issue a directive deemed necessary to implement a policy of not arresting individuals who possess or distribute fentanyl test strips for harm reduction purposes.
- 2) The Director of the Department of Public Safety, the Manager of the Office of Community Health and Safety, or their designees shall collaborate to develop an ongoing training plan on fentanyl test strips for City of Pittsburgh employees and Officers.
- 3) The Manager of the Office of Community Health and Safety or their designee shall implement a public outreach campaign to educate Pittsburgh residents and community organizations on the presence of fentanyl in the drug supply, the importance of using fentanyl test strips, and other harm reduction and overdose prevention strategies proven to save lives.



Given under my hand and the **Great Seal of the City of Pittsburgh** at the **City-County Building**, on this Thirty-First day of August in the year Two Thousand & Twenty-One.

WILLIAM PEDUTO
MAYOR OF PITTSBURGH