

Resolution  
Drafted 2/2/2023

**A resolution of the Missoula City Council addressing and urging the use of drug checking tools in an effort to prevent overdoses and promote public health, safety, and general welfare**

**Whereas**, the number of overdose deaths in the United States has increased to the highest of any 12-month period in history with over 88,000 people dying from an overdose in the United States between September 2019 and August 2020; and

**Whereas**, in 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration announced and encouraged the use of federal funding to purchase rapid fentanyl test strips to use as a tool to curb the significant increase in drug overdose deaths; and

**Whereas**, in 2021, the Montana state crime lab saw fentanyl-linked fatal overdoses increase more than 1,100 percent since 2017 (from 4 in 2017 to 49 in 2021); and

**Whereas**, in the first five months of 2022, the Montana state crime lab has already confirmed 34 deaths where fentanyl was involved; and

**Whereas**, in March of 2022, the Blackfeet Tribe declared a state of emergency after 17 drug overdoses – including four that were fatal – occurred in just one week; and

**Whereas**, the City of Missoula supports sobriety, treatment, and other harm reduction practices; and

**Whereas**, Montana municipal governments are empowered to adopt resolutions to secure and promote public health, safety, and general welfare; and

**Whereas**, treatment of substance use dependence requires a comprehensive public health approach to prevent unnecessary deaths; and

**Whereas**, drug checking tools (such as fentanyl testing strips or reagents) help identify the presence of certain substances (such as fentanyl) contained in the sample based on color and feature changes, and corresponding codes; and

**Whereas**, drug checking tools are a cheap and effective behavioral intervention for people who use drugs that can be used with minimal training; and

**Whereas**, the Missoula region is eligible for approximately \$223,000 from the Janssen (Johnson and Johnson) opioid lawsuit settlement in the first year, and approximately \$150,000 each year for the next 18 years; and

**Whereas**, people who use drugs should be informed about the composition of the drugs they plan on ingesting, to make decisions to not use a drug and/or prevent accidental poisoning and overdose; and

**Whereas**, the inaccessibility and stigma of drug checking tools is a dangerous barrier to ensuring people have informed decisions about choosing to ingest or not ingest a drug, which leads to accidental poisoning and overdoses; and

**Whereas**, various scientific studies have identified the distribution and use of fentanyl test strips as an effective public health intervention resulting in up to 77% of individuals whose drug tested positive for fentanyl taking steps to reduce their risk of an overdose, including changing how they use a drug, discarding their drug supply, not using alone, and keeping naloxone nearby; and

**Whereas**, the distribution of drug checking tools represents one of the few effective policies to reduce harmful outcomes related to drug use, to reduce fatal overdoses among people who use drugs and has proven to save lives; and

**Now therefore be it resolved**, that the Mayor and City Council hereby declare that it shall be the policy of the City of Missoula to provide drug checking tools and relevant educational materials to its residents through local government agencies and public health stakeholders in the community; and

**Be it further resolved**, that the City of Missoula do a public service announcement and provide clear signage to announce this policy and encourage people who use drugs to seek out drug checking tools to bolster the health, well-being, and safety of all Missoulians.