

January 11, 2024

**Testimony Submitted to the U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs on
“Stopping the Flow of Fentanyl: Public Awareness and Legislative Solutions”**

**Jason “Jelly Roll” DeFord
Recording Artist / Philanthropist**

Chairman Brown, Ranking Member Scott, and esteemed Committee members,

My name is Jason DeFord, but I am known to most as Jelly Roll. I am a recording artist and musical performer from Antioch, Tennessee.

Today, I am here to address a dire crisis crippling our nation, one that has likely claimed the life of a friend, child, or relative of nearly everyone in this room. The opioid epidemic, especially the devastation caused by fentanyl, demands immediate action. It is a national emergency. Americans are dying every day, and at a staggering rate.

In 2021, nearly 107,000 Americans succumbed to overdoses, with fentanyl being responsible for 65% of these tragedies. 2022 witnessed an even further increase in fentanyl-related fatalities. Astonishingly, the DEA confiscated over 379 million doses of fentanyl that year, enough to end every American life.

In the past two years, I have attended four funerals for loved ones lost to recreational drugs tainted with lethal substances. My purpose here is not to defend the use of illegal drugs, and I recognize the paradox of my past as a drug dealer now addressing this committee. The essential truth is that enacting legislation to combat the supply and distribution of fentanyl will save lives.

Recently, this Committee and the Senate approved the bipartisan FEND Off Fentanyl Act, targeting Chinese chemical suppliers and Mexican cartels that are devastating our communities with opioids.

This critical bill MUST become law.

This issue transcends partisanship and ideology. It affects all demographics and touches every community nationwide.

At every concert I perform, I witness the heartbreaking impact of fentanyl. Fans, grappling with this tragedy in their families, seek solace in music and hope that their experiences won't befall others. They crave reassurance – that their elected representatives value their lives and those of their lost loved ones above political agendas. My appeal to this Committee, and to all members of the House and Senate, is to offer this hope. Let's demonstrate that compassion and concern for American lives are bipartisan values.

Thank you for considering my message and for your commitment to addressing this critical issue.