



FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE

Testimony of
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“Stopping the Flow of Fentanyl: Public Awareness and Legislative Solutions”

before the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs



Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Scott, and the other Members of this distinguished Committee and thank you for the chance to appear before you today to provide a law enforcement perspective on how we as a nation can step up our efforts to stop the fentanyl epidemic that is killing Americans at an alarming rate.

In 2021, more than 100,000 Americans died from a drug overdose—65% of which are attributable to fentanyl. The National Institute on Drug Abuse recently found that fentanyl and fentanyl analogs are “the main driver of drug overdose deaths” with a nearly 750% increase from 2015 to 2021. The U.S. drug overdose death toll for 2022 is nearly 110,000, primarily from synthetic opioids like fentanyl, making them the leading cause of death for Americans ages 18-49.

Drug cartels use precursor chemicals sourced from China to manufacture pills that are intentionally made to look like prescription medications like OxyContin, Percocet, and Xanax. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) estimates that 40-60% of these fake pills, often bought through social media platforms as well as dealers, are laced with a deadly dose of fentanyl. Taking just one of these pills can be lethal.

These overdose deaths continue to rise despite the joint efforts of the DEA and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, both of which have partnered with State and local law enforcement agencies to prevent fentanyl and similar opioids from getting into our communities. The DEA estimates it seized more than 379 million potentially deadly doses of fentanyl and fentanyl analogs, yet the death toll continues to rise.

As law enforcement officers, my members are on the front lines, and they know first-hand just how devastating this drug epidemic is in our communities. Our officers are not only working to keep drugs out of our neighborhoods, but they are also actively pursuing the dealers of this poison on our streets and online by arresting them and aiding their prosecution.

Our role goes beyond just interdiction and enforcement, but also to help preserve the sanctity of human life. Law enforcement officers are typically the first to respond to a 911 call about a potential overdose. Many, but not enough, officers have access to naloxone, a life-saving medication that can reverse an opioid overdose if given in time. Law enforcement officers and other emergency responders are likely to save hundreds if not thousands of lives across our country every day.

Law enforcement officers are also the ones tasked with delivering the news to family members that their loved ones died from an overdose. As upsetting as we find the statistics on opioid deaths, it pales in comparison to the grief of a family that lost a son, daughter, brother, sister, father, or mother.

Sadly, law enforcement officers experience every facet of this devastating drug—we work to stem the flow of fentanyl into our communities, to capture and punish those who deal these drugs, to save the lives of those who do overdose, and, when tragedy strikes, to deliver the news to the families of those killed by this poison.

We recognize the nature of the threat our country is facing, but we must do more if we are to end or mitigate the deadly impact of fentanyl and fentanyl analogs on our citizens. We need a fully comprehensive, national strategy to reduce overdoses, disrupt trafficking operations, attack traffickers and cartels with sanctions, and prioritize anti-money laundering efforts related to the illicit opioids trade.

The FOP was proud to work with Ranking Member Scott and Chairman Brown to develop what became S. 1271, the “Fentanyl Eradication and Narcotics Deterrence (FEND) Off Fentanyl Act.” The legislation has broad bipartisan support from 66 Members of the Senate and passed this Committee over the summer. The Senate should take it up and pass this critical and commonsense measure as quickly as it can.

The “FEND Off Fentanyl Act” would direct the resources of the U.S. government to target the fentanyl supply chain—from the chemical suppliers in China to the cartels in Mexico smuggling it into the United States—by requiring the President to impose and enforce sanctions on criminal actors and organizations, increasing the likelihood that those who defy U.S. law will be caught and prosecuted. We also support the use of the lawfully forfeited assets of these traffickers to further law enforcement efforts to combat these criminals.

The bill would also direct the U.S. Department of the Treasury to prioritize identifying suspicious transactions in our financial system related to fentanyl trafficking by including descriptions of cartel financing actions in all Suspicious Activity Reports (SAR). The bill also authorizes the Treasury Department to use special measures to combat money-laundering operations related to trafficking in fentanyl and similar opioids. This will reduce the profitability of the drug trade and help bring those profiting from the deaths of American citizens to justice.

All the measures and tools proposed in S. 1271 will reduce the number of Americans who suffer and die from fentanyl, fentanyl analogs, and other deadly and illicit opioids—and that should be our number one goal. We must reduce the loss of life through vigorous interdiction of the drug supply train, relentless pursuit of the dealers, cartels, and suppliers, greater availability of naloxone to law enforcement and emergency responders, as well as passing the “FEND Off Fentanyl Act.” We need every tool in our toolbox to get a handle on this deadly epidemic.

On behalf of our more than 373,000 members, I thank you again for the opportunity to share the perspective of the Fraternal Order of Police with the Members of this committee. I am now willing to answer any questions you may have.