

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

October 24, 2023

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
1180 2nd Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

The Honorable Anne Milgram
DEA Administrator
U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration
8701 Morrisette Drive
Springfield, VA 22152

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Administrator Milgram:

We write to express our grave concern about the flow of fentanyl into our country and communities all across our State of North Carolina. In the past nine years, over 13,000 North Carolinians have died from fentanyl overdoses.¹ The overdoses are being driven by various factors including the open border, drug cartels using social media apps to sell drugs, and the Chinese Communist Party's failure to stop fentanyl precursors from being shipped to drug cartels.

On August 31, 2023, *Axios Raleigh*, reported that Raleigh Police Department (RPD) alone has seized over 17 kilograms of fentanyl in 2023. The amount seized by the RPD is enough to kill 8.5 million people, which is 85% of North Carolina's population.² Rural areas in North Carolina have not been immune to the fentanyl crisis. In July 2023, the Gaston County Police seized 10,000 fentanyl with a street value of \$330,000 which weighed approximately 1 kilogram.³ Broken border policies are driving cartels to engulf our country with drugs. During fiscal year 2023 (FY23), over 25,000 pounds of fentanyl were seized at the southern border alone.⁴ This number does not include the fentanyl evaded detection and made it into communities across North Carolina and the nation.

¹ Joe Killian, Families grieving fentanyl deaths to rally in support of new laws, *NC NEWSLINE*, (August 9, 2023), <https://ncnewsline.com/2023/08/09/families-grieving-fentanyl-deaths-to-rally-in-support-of-new-laws/>

² Lucille Sherman, *Raleigh police have seized enough fentanyl this year to kill 8.5 million*, *Axios Raleigh*, (August 31, 2023), <https://www.axios.com/local/raleigh/2023/08/31/raleigh-nc-police-fentanyl-overdose-naloxone>

³ Stephanie Moore, *10,000 Fentanyl pills found in Virgin Mary statue during traffic stop in NC, police say*, *WYFF4*, (July 26, 2023), <https://www.wyff4.com/article/fentanyl-pills-virgin-mary-statue-north-carolina-traffic-stop/44649335#>

⁴ U.S. Customs and Border Security, *Drug Seizure Statistics FY2023*, *U.S. Customs and Border Security*, (September 22, 2023), <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/drug-seizure-statistics>

While the fentanyl threat continues, North Carolina is also seeing the veterinary sedative Xylazine, better known by the street name “Tranq”, also impact our state.⁵ This sedative has been found to be mixed with fentanyl or common opioids, which is leading to overdoses and, in some cases, the repetitive use of Xylazine is causing skin ulcers.⁶ In North Carolina, the UNC Street Drug Lab in Chapel Hill and Keystone Laboratories in Asheville are leading the effort in toxicology testing.⁷ According to the UNC Street Drug Lab, Tranq has been detected in over 20 North Carolina counties.⁸

Our nation is being poisoned by fentanyl and other deadly narcotics that are pouring in from our open border. Families from all demographics are being impacted and losing loved ones daily. As of April, 2023, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that the United States had over 106,000 overdose deaths, which included fentanyl-related deaths during a 12-month period.⁹ We urge the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) to use all the tools at your disposal to dismantle the drug cartels and halt the incursion of drugs flowing into our country.

To help us better understand the efforts by DEA and DHS to stop the fentanyl crisis, we respectfully ask you to please provide answers to the following questions no later than November 24, 2023:

1. How are DHS and DEA working with our local and State law enforcement to track and dismantle drug networks? What federal resources are needed to address the fentanyl crisis in North Carolina?
2. What steps has DHS and DEA taken to counter social media recruitment by drug cartels?
3. Have DHS and DEA worked with social media platforms to stop the sale of fentanyl and illicit narcotics?
4. What strategic plan does DHS have in place to stop drug cartels from smuggling drugs across the southern border? What strategic plan does DEA have in place to address the drugs flowing into the U.S. interior?
5. What public outreach has been done to warn Americans about new emerging drug threats like Xylazine (Tranq)?

⁵ Joy Avery, *NC DPH: Xylazine (known on the street as Tranq) Abuse Growing. New Exposure Guidance Issued*, North Carolina Medical Society, (May 18, 2023) <https://ncmedsoc.org/nc-dph-xylazine-known-on-the-street-at-tranq-abuse-growing-new-exposure-guidance-issued/>

⁶ Kimberly McDonald, *Xylazine Exposure Guidance*, NC Department of Health and Human Services, (May 12, 2023), https://ncmedsoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/xylazine_memo__dph_may_16_2023.pdf

⁷ Austin Walker, *The biggest and quickest spread' | Inside an NC facility testing for xylazine*, WCNC, (July 5, 2023), <https://www.wcnc.com/article/news/health/north-carolina-lab-starts-testing-tranq-xylazine/275-07387ed9-fbac-4da2-b51c-446099599dcf>

⁸ UNC Chapel Hill, *North Carolina Xylazine Report*, UNC Drug Analysis Lab, <https://ncxylazine.streamlit.app/>

⁹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Provision Drug Overdose Death Counts*, National Center for Health Statistics, (September 13, 2023), <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm>

6. How are DHS and DEA recording the seizures when it pertains to Tranq? Are they being tallied as fentanyl, opioid, or marked as a sperate substance?
7. Have DHS and DEA identified who is supplying drug cartels with the xylazine? If so, what actions have been taken?
8. What action have DHS and DEA taken to halt China's fentanyl precursor chemicals from being shipped to drug cartels like the Jalisco New Generation and Sinaloa Cartels?
9. What are the latest efforts that DEA and DHS have taken to dismantle the Jalisco New Generation and Sinaloa Cartel?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this serious matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Thom Tillis
United States Senator



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United States Senator