

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

August 9, 2022

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

Dear Administrator Milgram:

We write to express our concern regarding the alarming rate of illicit drugs flooding our communities. Illicit drugs like counterfeit pills laced with fentanyl are not only getting into the hands of adults, but also to the most vulnerable members in our communities, our children. We are writing to request information detailing what the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) is doing to stop drug networks and cartels from overflowing our communities with illicit narcotics.

Our nation is facing an unprecedented opioid crisis that is devastating our communities and impacting families from all demographics. On February 9, 2022, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that the United States had over 100,000 fentanyl related deaths in a 12-month period.¹ The overdoses are fueled from multiple fronts including the porous southern border, drug networks using social media to sell illicit narcotics, and China's supply of the bulk of the precursor chemicals to drug cartels for fentanyl production.²

As *Politico* reported on February 7, 2022, China is exporting these chemicals directly to drug organizations like the Sinaloa Cartel and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel.³ These drug trafficking organizations are producing lethal counterfeit pills that are laced with fentanyl are then smuggled into the United States. American families ultimately deal with the repercussions of this criminal activity when they lose a loved one to an overdose.⁴

Evidence of the smuggling of illicit narcotics by drug trafficking organizations can be seen across the country. In North Carolina, the Guilford County Sheriff's Office and Rockingham County Sheriff's Investigators conducted a joint operation which led to the seizure

¹ Ahmad FB, Cisewski JA, Rossen LM, Sutton P, *Provisional drug overdose death counts*, National Center for Health Statistics, (February 9, 2022), <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm>.

² Phelim Kine, *The war on drugs puts a target on China*, *Politico*, (February 7, 2022), <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/02/07/fentanyl-china-war-on-drugs-00005920>.

³ *Id.* (02.07.2022).

⁴ *Id.* (02.07.2022).

of enough fentanyl to kill around 19,000 people.⁵ On July 18, 2022, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) arrested a drug smuggler near Campos, California who was in possession of approximately 250lbs of fentanyl laced pills. The fentanyl laced pills had an estimated street value of \$3.6 million dollars and a potency to kill over 56 million people.⁶

We understand that it takes a multipronged strategy to address this crisis, but we respectfully ask you explain to us what actions the DEA is taking to dismantle drug networks, counter drug cartels, and halt the illicit narcotics from flooding into our communities. We ask that you please provide answers to the following questions no later than August 31, 2022:

1. How is the DEA working with our local and State law enforcement to track and dismantle drug networks? What federal resources does DEA have available for local and State law enforcement?
2. What initiatives are being taken to arrest cartel members from the Sinaloa Cartel and Jalisco New Generation Cartel who are running drug operations in the interior of the United States?
3. What efforts has the DEA taken to intercept precursor chemicals being shipped from China?
4. What action has the DEA taken to work with social media platforms to help prevent drug networks from selling illicit narcotics to users?
5. Do you agree that the southern border crisis is helping fuel the flood of counterfeit pills laced with fentanyl and other illicit narcotics into our communities?
6. How is the DEA working with the CBP to stop drug cartels from smuggling drugs through our southern border?
7. How is the DEA working with southern border States to stop drug cartels from smuggling drugs through our southern border?
8. Are there any upcoming campaigns that DEA will be doing that Congress should be aware of? How can Congress assist the DEA in achieving its mission?
9. Can you point to any contributing factors to the fentanyl crisis that Congress needs to be aware of beyond the border crisis and China supply chain? How should those factors be addressed?
10. What kinds of coordinating efforts is your agency undertaking with DHHS to prepare them for the mental health and substance use disorder ramifications of the fentanyl spike?

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

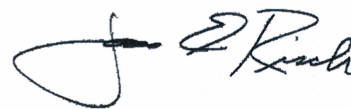
⁵ Emily Van de Riet, *Police seize 'enough fentanyl to kill 19,000 people' in massive drug bust*, Live 5 WCSC News, (March 30, 2022), <https://www.live5news.com/2022/03/30/police-seize-enough-fentanyl-kill-19000-people-massive-drug-bust/>.

⁶ CPB Public Affairs, *Border patrol Agents Seize Over 200 Pounds of Fentanyl*, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, (July 18, 2022), <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/local-media-release/border-patrol-agents-seize-over-200-pounds-fentanyl>.

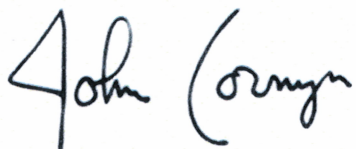
Sincerely,



Thom Tillis
United States Senator



James E. Risch
United States Senator



John Cornyn
United States Senator



Mike Crapo
United States Senator



Ted Cruz
United States Senator