



October 18, 2023

## PROPONENT HB230

Dear Chairman and Members of the Ohio House Homeland Security Committee,

I would like to thank Chairman Ghanbari, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Thomas, Representative Abrams and all the Members of the House Homeland Security Committee for this opportunity to offer my vehement support for HB230.

8 years ago, I was the proud mother of 3 children and a grandmother. Today I am an Ohio resident and the Co-President of Lost Voices of Fentanyl the largest non-profit organization in the nation fully devoted to illicit fentanyl prevention, awareness and education with more than 30,000 bereaved and impacted family members in our online Facebook support group alone.

My only daughter Tiffany was in pain after a serious back injury, she was offered what appeared to be a prescription pill. The pill looked identical to a trademarked Percocet in every way, but it was a fake pill which contained illicit fentanyl - it killed her on February 2, 2015. Tiffany left behind two brothers and two young children.

My youngest son was so traumatized by her loss that he fell into deep despair. Zachary started to use methamphetamines and developed substance use disorder (SUD), he suffered serious near-death injuries 3 times from illicit fentanyl in methamphetamines.

It must be noted that Tiffany **DID NOT** "overdose" she was poisoned by a fake pill. A pill which was very deliberately made to deceive her into believing it was a well-known and trusted trademarked pharmaceutical product. It was put into this form to gain her confidence and trust. It was designed to sicken her - to invoke a rapid addiction to illicit fentanyl – and it killed her.

My son Zachary **DID NOT** "overdose", he was deceived and poisoned by illicit fentanyl hidden in methamphetamines. Neither of my children wanted or intended to consume illicit fentanyl. That choice was stolen from them by criminals.

**Anytime a person disguises or hides a harmful substance in ANYTHING for another person to consume without knowledge or intent and it causes harm or death, it is a poisoning.**

**In the last National Drug Survey 138.543 million or 50.0% of people aged 12 and over surveyed have reported using an off-market pill or an illicit drug in their lifetime. Nearly half the U.S. population and now we have fake prescription pills and a contaminated recreational drug supply. This is our new potential victim pool.**

Since 2013 more than 300,000 lives have been lost to illicit fentanyl poisonings and countless near-death injuries have occurred due to illicit fentanyl poisonings. Nationally more lives were lost to illicit fentanyl poisonings in 2022 alone than we lost during the entire 20-year long Vietnam war. Illicit fentanyl is now the #1 cause of accidental death in the U.S., the fastest growing demographic for death are ages 18 and under.

The sad truth is that we know how many are dead, but we DO NOT know:

- a) How many victims have suffered near death injuries and survived illicit fentanyl poisonings.
- b) How many hypoxic brain injuries have been caused by illicit fentanyl poisonings.
- c) How many victims have died or been injured by fake pills?

- d) How many victims were the result of contaminated drugs?
- e) How many victims have or had a history of SUD?
- f) How many victims were the result of incidental contact?

There are no studies on these new analogues of illicit fentanyl. We simply don't know all that they are capable of and to date no formal studies have been conducted to get these answers. Instead, we rely on conjecture from the 1980's surrounding pharmaceutical grade products for what little public safety information we do have.

There are still far too many unknowns in this new crisis but there are a few things WE DO KNOW.

- 1) **WE KNOW** people in every age group, race, religion, financial class and political background are dying in numbers never seen before in all our history.
- 2) **WE KNOW** that illicit fentanyl is highly lethal.
- 3) **WE KNOW** that drug traffickers are creating fake pills made to mimic safe trademarked pharmaceutical products to deceive consumers.
- 4) **WE KNOW** that that criminal drug traffickers and manufacturers are contaminating commonly used party drugs with illicit fentanyl ranging from cocaine to heroin and everything in between.
- 5) **WE KNOW** that many victims did not suffer from substance use disorder.
- 6) **WE KNOW** that many victims were NOT aware illicit fentanyl was present in what they consumed.
- 7) **WE KNOW** that those selling and distributing illicit fentanyl are very aware of what their product is, they know what it is capable of, and they are fully aware that someone could be seriously injured or die from their illicit fentanyl products. They know and distribute it anyway.

Unlike other drugs in the past 1 gram of illicit fentanyl is enough to kill 500 people. Criminal traffickers are making fake pills and contaminating recreational drugs and they are concealing illicit fentanyl in a deliberate and calculated effort to deceive consumers, to hide the presence of illicit fentanyl. If they intended for the consumer to be aware of what the product was, they would be making pills with special markings to identify them. The absence of marked products is in and of itself an indicator of their intent to conceal, hide or deceive.

The high potency and portability of illicit fentanyl is what attracted cartels and criminal drug traffickers to this product in the first place. It is highly addictive and that means more cash flow. Despite the rising death tolls criminal elements continue to manufacture fake pills, contaminate recreational drugs and distribute illicit fentanyl. By doing so they are deceiving, endangering, sickening and killing hundreds of thousands of people annually leaving in their wake millions of bereaved and negatively impacted family members.

For too long we have allowed these criminal drug traffickers and manufacturers to endanger the public and get away with mass poisoning and mass murder by poisoning. Today we have an opportunity to put in place mechanisms to fight back.

There is still much work to be done. We desperately need to put in place adequate tracking systems. We need studies on these new analogues of illicit fentanyl, we desperately need broad public awareness efforts to reach these new demographics being impacted to warn them of this new danger. We need support mechanisms for the survivors of near-death injuries, for the children and family members left behind who struggle, for the grandparents struggling to raise their grandchildren.

Ohio could lead the nation with a solid well informed and well put together response effort. By adopting a whole of society approach we can, and we will reach many of the potential victims out there and by doing so we can save countless lives.

But the one thing we must do to stop a poisoning crisis is to first recognize **THAT WE HAVE** a poisoning crisis and then **STOP THE POISON.**

We have an opportunity with HB 230 to turn the tide. By passing this bill we can send a clear message to these criminal organizations and major drug traffickers that Ohio will not stand by idly and allow them to continue endangering the public nor to sicken and mass poison Ohio families. You can show Ohioan's that you stand firmly on the side of Ohio families, and that you will do everything in your power to protect them from these bad actors causing so much harm.

We have a huge opportunity today to stop the hurting and start the healing. Please be the ones who do, the life you save may be someone you love.

We at Lost Voices of Fentanyl remain fully committed to fighting illicit fentanyl on every front.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration of this most important matter. If you would like more information, please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully,

Virginia Krieger, Bereaved Mother and Co-President  
Lost Voices of Fentanyl

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