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Sponsor Testimony
Senate Resolution 251
Ohio Senate Community Revitalization Committee
May 7th, 2024

Chairman Landis, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Community Revitalization Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Resolution 251.

This resolution urges Congress to designate fentanyl as a Weapon of Mass Destruction.

As the opioid crisis has swept over our nation, fentanyl has remained at the forefront. It is 50 times more potent than heroin, 100 times more potent than morphine,¹ and is frequently laced into other counterfeit or illicit substances. While there are some legitimate uses for fentanyl as a severe pain medication or anesthetic, its popularity in the illicit drug market has exploded due to its potency and cheapness to manufacture.

Only two milligrams of fentanyl can be a fatal dose, and one kilogram of fentanyl has the potential to kill 500,000 people. Forty-two percent of pills tested for fentanyl contained at least a potentially lethal dose of the drug.² In 2021, over 70,000 Americans lost their lives to fentanyl,

¹<https://www.dea.gov/factsheets/fentanyl#:~:text=Fentanyl%20is%20a%20potent%20synthetic,than%20heroin%20as%20an%20analgesic.>

² <https://www.dea.gov/resources/facts-about-fentanyl>

and this number is likely underreported given the nature of the death.³ More than 4000 of those Americans were Ohioans.⁴

While tragic, this crisis is no accident. Drug cartels, money laundering enterprises, and enemies of the United States such as the Chinese Communist Party profit directly from the distribution of fentanyl.

You have already heard explained through testimony on Senate Resolution 242 the evils of cartels and how they perpetuate drug trafficking into the United States. Seizures of drugs in enormous, lucrative quantities, especially on our southern border, are increasing each year.

Further back in the supply chain, the People's Republic of China financially rewards companies that manufacture fentanyl and its precursors through tax incentives and special economic designations.⁵

At each and every stage of illicit fentanyl's production and distribution, it is used as a tool of destabilization and destruction.

Foreign actors have also used fentanyl explicitly as a tool of war. Famously, in 2002, Russia used a fentanyl-related gas to attempt to neutralize a group of Chechen rebels who had taken hostages in a Moscow theater. While exact numbers are disputed, the gas had destructive consequences, killing many innocent hostages.⁶

³ <https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/trends-statistics/overdose-death-rates>

⁴ https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/wcm/connect/gov/86452388-2e4b-48d6-a5e8-90ce24b30d0f/Ohio+Quarterly+Overdose+Report_Preliminary+Data_Q1_2023.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CONVERT_TO=url&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE.Z18_M1HGGIK0N0JO00QO9DDDDM3000-86452388-2e4b-48d6-a5e8-90ce24b30d0f-otRHmeH

⁵ *Fentanyl, Inc.* by Ben Westhoff, chapters 18-19

⁶ <https://www.history.com/news/opioid-chemical-weapons-moscow-theater-hostage-crisis>

Former Acting Director of the CIA Michael Morell described carfentanil, an even more potent derivative of fentanyl, as “a significant threat to national security” and “a weapon of mass destruction,” going on to say “Indeed, carfentanil is the perfect terrorist weapon. It is readily available in large quantities. It comes in several forms – including tablets, powder, and spray. It can be absorbed through the skin or through inhalation. It acts quickly. And, it is deadly.”⁷ He continues to urge the United States government and the intelligence community to take this threat seriously.

H.R. 3666, the Stop Our Scourge Act of 2023, takes a meaningful step in doing so, by designating illicit fentanyl as a weapon of mass destruction, which is why I believe the Ohio Senate should urge its passage.

Thank you again for your time and attention. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

⁷https://www.thecipherbrief.com/column_article/opioid-crisis-becomes-national-security-threat