

Chairman Gambari, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Thomas, and Members of the House Homeland Security Committee – thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 230.

As Representative Abrams stated from my quote: Please as you sit here, do not think to yourself “Oh my God I couldn’t imagine” either could I. I want you to imagine”

Father of murdered/poisoned 21 year old daughter-By a fake Xanax ( the DEA showed me the pills)

My name is Mark. I’m a middle-aged, middle-class father who’s been married for twenty-eight years. We rescued a dog and a cat from the humane society that now live with us in our Cincinnati suburban home. What I’m trying to say is that I’m just your average guy, a typical sight in average America. Covid hit me like it did everyone else: business changed, pockets tightened, fears grew, habits adjusted, and bankruptcy felt imminent until it didn’t. March, April, and May were hard months for us. But then came June. June fifth, to be exact. On that day, our family wasn’t lucky to call ourselves like everyone else.

My wife and I hadn’t heard from our daughter for a worrying period of time that quickly pushed our emotions from normal to nervous. We eventually tracked down that she was staying at a nearby hotel with friends, but by the time we found out it was too late. In the hours that followed, time somehow stopped and sped up simultaneously. There in the hotel parking lot, with the coroner and flashing blue-red lights, my wife and I tried to process the news a parent prays never to hear. People came and went: some speaking to us, some just watching the scene unfold.

For Americans age 18-45, the leading cause of death is fentanyl poisoning (My thought- This stat does not include minor’s)

Source: <https://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.gov/media/dea-administrator-record-fentanyl-overdose-deaths#:~:text=LAST%20UPDATED%3A,100%20times%20stronger%20than%20morphine.>

Forward To; April 2023

One late night I received a call from an unrestricted number, it was my Butler County Sheriff Jones, inviting me in the most respectful way possible to trip to the border, Cochise County, AZ.

In the company of—Rep Abrams, Sheriff Jones, former state senator Gary Cates, and the diligent journalist Liz Bonis from channel 12 news Cincinnati—I found myself embedded at the southern border for two days (To my knowledge the only American whose child was poisoned), witnessing a reality that struck me to my core. As a business owner, I marveled at the sinister efficiency of the Cartels’ distribution network. They operated devoid of legality, taxes, HR departments, 401k plans, or quality control measures. There were no freight charges, no disgruntled employees filing complaints—just a ruthless, tax-free industry.

What unfolded before my eyes shook me, brought me to my knees in tears: hardened commandos, their faces veiled, crossed the border with backpacks laden with contraband. Through nefarious geo-locator apps, Americans were signaled to rendezvous with these human cargo, a sinister trade that extended far beyond the realm of marijuana. These individuals, once innocuous, were now unwittingly entangled in a dangerous game, hurtling toward towns across America. It's only 26-hour drive from Cochise County, AZ to West Chester, Ohio. A \$15,000 investment could yield a staggering \$1.2 million on the streets, a shocking revelation shared by Jaime Ignacio Puerta, Co-founder and President at VOID (Victims Of Illicit Drugs).

Every life claimed by this epidemic has a unique story, yet a common thread of agony weaves them together. I've spoken to parents whose children met tragic ends, victims of fentanyl hidden cunningly in a water bottle. Meanwhile, a rising tide of young souls, burdened by anxiety, depression, and thoughts of self-harm, seek solace in substances. Unable to afford professional help or navigate the complexities of healthcare, they turn to the dark web, where pills and drugs are just a click away.

In my advocacy for bill 230, my hope is to instill a flicker of hesitation in the minds of these dealers, to make them pause and reconsider-just for a second. But truthfully, I have lost the love of my life, my heart and soul, to this merciless crisis.

So implore you, not for my sake, but for yours and for the safety of your family. Let us pass this bill, not out of obligation to me, but out of a shared duty to protect America's sons and daughters. The battle against this darkness is not just mine; it is ours, and together, we must stand against the tides of despair, fighting for a future where no more hearts are broken, and no more lives are lost.

Words I share to young people:

I had the opportunity to address a group of students at Butler Tech in Butler County, Ohio, and I shared a heartfelt message: "I'm not here to dictate what you can or cannot do; I understand that choices are yours to make. However, I urge you to pause and reflect deeply before you snort or ingest anything that hasn't been prescribed by a doctor. Picture, for a moment, the consequences: consider yourself gone, lost to the world. Imagine the unbearable pain and eternal grief your family would endure. Reflect on the lasting impact your choices could have on the people who love you most. Let this awareness guide your decisions, not out of fear, but out of love and respect for yourself and those who care about you."

"Thank you again for allowing me to provide testimony, I will now stand for questions."

In 2022, DEA seized more than 59.6 million fentanyl-laced fake pills and more than 13,000 pounds of fentanyl powder. The 2022 seizures are equivalent to more than 395.7 million lethal doses of fentanyl.

The 2023 fentanyl seizures represent over 287 million deadly doses. \* My thought: how much wasn't seized)

Laboratory testing indicates 7 out of every 10 pills seized by DEA contain a lethal dose of fentanyl.

DEA has seized a record 62 million fentanyl pills to date in 2023, which already exceeds last year's totals of 58 million pills.

Source: <https://www.dea.gov/onepill>

For Immediate Release...

October 16th, 2023

Three Kilos of Fentanyl Seized

Sheriff Richard K. Jones reports that on October 14th, 2023, at approximately 12:30 p.m., the Butler County Sheriff's Office K-9 Units conducted a traffic stop on State Route 4. The driver, Luis Hernandez-Ramos, and passenger, Douglas Mancias-Martinez, both had Mexican driver's licenses. They provided conflicting stories and displayed nervous behavior, which led to a K-9 vehicle search.

The K-9 alerted and resulted in the seizure of 3 kilos of fentanyl in vacuum-sealed packages. Both driver and passenger were arrested and booked into the Butler County Jail for possession of drugs and trafficking in drugs, which are felonies of the first degree. Three kilos of fentanyl can kill approximately one million people. Sheriff Jones says, "These men were undocumented illegals crossing the border. They brought their drugs into the wrong County."

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