



TESTIMONY | Center for Homeland Security & Immigration

AFPI SUPPORTS OHIO HOUSE BILL

(H.B.) 230

OCT. 17, 2023

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF THE AMERICA FIRST POLICY INSTITUTE

Our Nation is in the midst of a serious public health crisis as illicit fentanyl is now the leading cause of death of young Americans, ages 18-45. The source of this poisoning epidemic is the Biden Administration's failed border strategy that has exposed our southern border and enabled the Mexican drug cartels to smuggle record amounts of deadly fentanyl into American communities. The cartels receive the fentanyl precursor chemicals from China and then they lace it into other illicit drugs. The harsh reality is that every state is now effectively a border state and too many Americans have lost loved ones or friends to fentanyl poisoning. Ohio knows this all too well, as 80% of drug overdose deaths in 2021 involved fentanyl.

Where the federal government has failed the American people, states are stepping up to keep their communities and citizens safe. The America First Policy Institute applauds Ohio State Representatives Cindy Abrams (R-Harrison) and D.J. Swearingen (R-Huron) for introducing H.B. [230](#), to "increase penalties for drug trafficking above certain amounts and to prohibit organized trafficking of persons." Specifically, this bill increases the penalties for fentanyl-related compounds and removes the knowledge requirement for possession of a fentanyl-related compound. It also requires all death certificates to indicate whether the cause of death was due to fentanyl poisoning and establishes a mandatory 5-year prison sentence for those involved if fentanyl was the cause of death. The bill also creates the offense of participating in a human trafficking organization or operation, punishable as a first-degree felony.

This robust and necessary America First legislation will help deter criminal activity, combat the cartels growing influence throughout the country, and keep Ohio communities safe. The bill's authors correctly understand the link between fentanyl poisoning and human trafficking and propose significant criminal penalties for these offenses. The fentanyl epidemic strains law enforcement as increased drug use leads to increased crime. When H.B. 230 becomes law, the severe consequences that attach to these offenses will provide a powerful tool for law enforcement and the justice system to take drug and human traffickers off the streets.

By imposing harsher penalties on manufacturers and distributors of fentanyl, Ohio will send a clear message that the reckless propagation of this lethal substance will not be tolerated in the Buckeye State. H.B. 230 will ensure that perpetrators face the full weight of the law for their contributions to the devastation caused by fentanyl. This bill should deter potential future offenders, dismantle illicit networks, and safeguard the lives of countless Ohioans.

AFPI endorses H.B. 230 and calls for its swift passage.

