

**STATEMENT**

**OF**

**Enoch “Nick” Willard**

**Chief of Police**

**Manchester Police Department**

**BEFORE THE**

**UNITED STATES SENATE**

**COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY**

**“ATTACKING AMERICA’S EPIDEMIC OF HEROIN AND PRESCRIPTION  
DRUG ABUSE”**

**JANUARY 27, 2016**

Chairman Grassley, Ranking Member Leahy, and distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the invitation to appear before the committee today. It is an honor to be able to share with you what my officers are dealing with on a daily basis with regard to the abuse of prescription opioids and heroin. In addition, the role of fentanyl in fatal overdoses is truly alarming.

I first want to thank Senators Whitehouse, Portman, Ayotte, and Klobuchar for their leadership on the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act. What law enforcement needs is a comprehensive and sustained approach to help prevention efforts, improve treatment, support for individuals in recovery, and adequate resources for state and local law enforcement who are on the front lines of this public health and safety crisis every day. This bill represents a huge step in the right direction, and I hope the committee will pass this legislation.

In 2013, the City of Manchester had 14 fatal overdoses, 30% of which were heroin and 7% of which were heroin mixed with fentanyl; in 2014, we experienced 19 fatal overdoses, of which 22% were heroin and 22% were heroin mixed with fentanyl. 21%

were strictly fentanyl; and in 2015 we suffered 69 fatal overdoses with a staggering 33% being straight fentanyl, 26 % fentanyl mixed with cocaine and another 9% fentanyl mixed with heroin.

Our citizens are dying because of the synthetic fentanyl that is being produced in clandestine labs in Mexico by the Sinaloa cartel. The poison the cartel is putting on the streets of America is an affront to our way of life. Not only is it taking lives, it's deteriorating communities, devastating families, and leaving children without parents. Some of these children are finding their parents who fatally overdosed. Fentanyl is so dangerous, that I have instituted strict handling procedure to protect our officers from being exposed to a potential overdose simply by absorbing it through the skin.

Senator Ayotte noted in her testimony the Stop Trafficking in Fentanyl Act, which would bring parity to the penalties for trafficking in heroin and the much more deadly fentanyl. I encourage the committee to pass this bill, which would enhance law enforcement's efforts to remove fentanyl from our streets and more appropriately prosecute those who are trafficking it.

When I took over as Chief of Police in July 2015, I expressed that

two of my top priorities were to deal with our city's heroin and fentanyl problem and to support and boost morale among the ranks of the Manchester Police Department. These two priorities are effectively interrelated at this point—my officers are out there every day trying to save lives and make our community safe, and today far too often fentanyl and heroin are the direct or indirect cause of any one public safety or health issue in Manchester.

In 2013, officers responded to 166 overdose calls for service; in 2014, 406; and in 2015, they responded to 616. Each one of those numbers is a person. Each one of those numbers represents time in which the officer is tied up. Each one of those numbers taxes the resources of our public safety professionals, police, fire and EMS.

After previously testifying in front of Senator Ayotte and Senator Shaheen, we created the first OCDETF strike force to go after the high level producers of the poison that is taking American lives. Locally, I've invited the DEA and NH State Police to partner with MPD and work collaboratively in Manchester to target the low-level drug dealers who directly affect the quality of life in the neighborhoods in which they are dealing drugs. We've conducted six of these operations thus far making 62 arrests, seizing 604

grams of heroin and a large quantity of other illegal drugs. Just recently the Manchester Police Drug Unit seized over 500 grams of pure fentanyl. This past summer MPD seized over 27,000 grams of heroin and fentanyl in just one investigation, whereas in all of 2014 MPD seized 1,314 grams of heroin. These numbers are truly staggering and beyond my capacity to truly understand how enormous of a problem we have. The addiction pool needs to shrink to lessen the demand, but the supply, most urgently, needs to be reduced with greater interdiction efforts.

Drug abuse is undoubtedly taking a toll on our city. Every single day, my officers are dealing with overdose victims. They are dealing with drug traffickers. There's also the intangible "quality of life" issue that drug abuse presents to us.

It is the mission of the Manchester Police Department to serve the greater good by protecting life, property and the liberties of Manchester's residents and the community at large. Sadly, the quality of life in Manchester is suffering from the scourge of prescription opioid and heroin abuse.

We must do more and we must do it now. At the same time, we must recognize this problem for what it is: a public safety and a

public health issue. It certainly has been said before, but we won't be able to arrest our way out of this problem. Treatment and support for recovery are critical to our work in law enforcement.

Last summer, the City of Manchester launched a comprehensive plan to help confront this epidemic. One part of that plan was to develop a continuum of care by mapping all community assets devoted to drug-addiction and allowing someone struggling with addiction to enter the system at any point along the continuum.

We are making great strides. A 24-hour continuum of care facility will be opening in the spring, which will allow 24-hour access to care for anyone seeking treatment, while affording my department a more compassionate alternative to arrest. I will continue to be aggressive in my fight to rid the city of Manchester of drugs, while supporting the recovery and treatment community; this is not just a law enforcement issue, it's a community issue, and as a community we will prevail through tireless action.

Thank you. I am happy to address any questions.

