

Dear Congress,

Ava Michelle Howland was born my only child 5/21/93. Ava had an amazing sense of humor. She was so free-spirited growing up. Ava loved being a competition cheerleader for many years. She also loved attending community college. Ava loved to go to the beach and enjoyed the sunshine. Our last vacation together was spent at the beach, I went to visit her while she was under treatment and living in a "sober home" in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida for Christmas.

My daughter Ava was a victim in what is referred to as the "Florida Shuffle", where she endured terrible things as a young, vulnerable adult. My Ava died May 11, 2018, in a "sober home" in Florida at the age of 24 in West Palm Beach, Florida. Ava was poisoned to death by Illicit Fentanyl, she died alone, found too late to revive with Narcan. After Ava died, her case was closed as soon as the toxicology report was received, I was never able to get justice for Ava's Drug-Induced Homicide, no one would help me or listen to me to investigate her death. I will always be so proud of my Ava! Ava smiled no matter how bad things were, her smile brings me joy, only now I can only see her smile in the pictures of our memories together, it is heartbreaking. Ava never stopped fighting for her life under impossible circumstances! She was victim of so many criminals who have since gone to jail and/or prison for their many crimes including patient brokering, health care and wire fraud. I am eternally grateful to the Department of Justice in Florida for putting some of these criminals in prison including the doctor that was treating my Ava Michelle. I was able to provide impact statements for the two cases below and speak for all those that died the way my child died or were harmed due to the criminal actions of the people below. I did not get one penny, but being Ava's voice was worth all the money in the world to me because she didn't deserve to die being poisoned to death and was cheated of real chance of recovery. The Department of Justice also recognized the great loss of our children in their press release which gave me some comfort my Ava Michelle had not died in vain, she had a voice, mine!

[Office of Public Affairs | Addiction Treatment Facility Operators Sentenced in \\$112 Million Addiction Treatment Fraud Scheme | United States Department of Justice](#)

[Criminal Division | United States v. Michael J. Ligotti](#)

Sadly, my Ava Michelle is one of the faces in the DEA Faces of Fentanyl Wall exhibit at the DEA headquarters in Arlington, Virginia bringing awareness to the countless lives lost to Illicit Fentanyl. **My Ava is not just a face on wall, she is my child who was poisoned to death by Illicit Fentanyl.** The DEA has been kind to our families, and I have attended the Philadelphia DEA Family Summits in the last couple of years which has been informative, healing and very helpful.

I have spent the last almost seven years (in May) putting my child on billboards & posters because no one was warning the public at large about the deadly dangers of Illicit Fentanyl. I spent almost 5 years doing outreaches for the homeless and those suffering Substance Use Disorder and Opioid Use Disorder spending much of my own money all while grieving the loss of my Ava to help others. I have rallied with the Lost Voices of Fentanyl in hurricane winds to bring awareness with so many families fighting for justice and to be heard. I give Narcan out to anyone that will accept it. I attend many awareness events. I hand out Fentanyl awareness cards to anyone that will take them. Ava's death to Illicit Fentanyl brought out a warrior in me to try to save lives and make sure other parents don't suffer the loss of their loved ones to this deadly poison, which is a weapon of mass destruction in my opinion and should be labeled

as such. I am a member and was a moderator for Pennsylvania Team Sharing helping grieving families heal as they navigated their own grief for their children lost to addiction.

I have been an advocate & member of Drug Induced Homicide, Inc., Founder Terry Almanza helping families to navigate our justice system regarding Drug Induced Homicide deaths & supporting them any way I can. I am the State Chapter Director for Drug Induced Homicide, Inc. & I also moderate the Pennsylvania State Drug Induced Homicide group on Facebook to help others.

Ava was my best friend, my protector, my life and now Ava is my reason for all I do to save lives and make people aware of the deadly dangers of Illicit Fentanyl. **Ava's life and future was stolen by Illicit Fentanyl.** Now my life is filled with tears, sorrow and sadness because I miss my Ava Michelle so very much and Mommy can't fix DEAD. Please help us stop the Illicit Fentanyl poisonings, we are trying to save Americans lives and need your support and help!

I hope that hearing these stories helps you to understand our children didn't want to die, they were poisoned to death!! OUR CHILDREN & LOVED ONES WERE VICTIMS OF THIS ILLICIT FENTANYL POISON!! Anything you can do to stop bad actors peddling, trafficking or making this poison killing over 100,000 Americans a year is vital to America's future.

Sincerely,

Deborah Howland

Deborah Howland, Mother of Ava Michelle Howland (Deceased)