

HALT FENTANYL ACT – FENTANYL TEST STRIPS

Chairman Grassley and
Ranking Member Durbin,

My name is Debbie Santini. I lost my youngest son Jesse Byrd to illicit fentanyl poisoning on February 16th 2022.

I had the privilege of attending the Judiciary Markup on the HALT Fentanyl Act on February 20th along with two other mothers, Jackie Long and April Babcock. Both lost their sons to illicit fentanyl poisoning as well. What I would like to bring to your attention and that of all the Senators is the discussion regarding the amendment for fentanyl test strips. With all due respect Senator Kennedy, I believe you and the some of your colleagues are not adequately informed about these test strips. As the democrats would have you think that these strips are a life saving tool, they are by no means to be compared to Naloxone which *is* life saving in the fact that Naloxone is an opioid antagonist and reverses the effects of an opioid overdose.

Fentanyl test strips are a tool that is rarely used by your “average” drug user. The request for this amendment by your counterparts will hold up this bill indefinitely. It will not improve this bill. It will introduce a completely different conversation that is in no way addressing scheduling fentanyl and its’ analogues as a Schedule 1 controlled dangerous substance.

When you asked what are test strips used for Senator Welch’s response was inaccurate. He said the strips are used *after* a fentanyl overdose to then be used by “medical folks to determine what it is.” Senator Booker did speak to the point of a substance user using these test strips to see if fentanyl is in their drug of choice, which is the intention of these test strips.

What needs to be considered here is who is actually using these strips and why. Most regularly active drug users are not taking the time to test their drugs. They already know that fentanyl is what they are using and some unfortunately seek fentanyl.

The “teenager” that is getting a pill on Snap Chat to help them “study for a test” and is not a drug user may not know about fentanyl test strips and even if they do their pill has to be broken down and dissolved in water for

testing. That only leaves 2 ways of using the pill now because it has been diluted. One is to inject it and the other is to cook it up and smoke it. Neither of which is why they bought the pill in the first place.

Another scenario is a cocaine user who snorts. They don't want fentanyl but again if they water down their powder cocaine to test for fentanyl, they cannot return it to its' original form to snort it. They too are left with the same two options – inject it or cook it up and smoke it.

These test strips are not completely accurate and can provide a false sense of safety. These strips, manufactured in China, is also a concern.

I volunteer with the nationwide nonprofit Lost Voices of Fentanyl which was founded by April Babcock after losing her son Austen in 2019. We are a grass roots, boots on the ground nonprofit that works tirelessly to help inform and educate the public and our communities on the dangers of illicit fentanyl. Lost Voices of Fentanyl (LVOF) focuses on supply and prevention of illicit, synthetic drugs in our country.

We greatly appreciate the hard work and time that both parties have put into this bill and pray that we can all come together to help save lives. The HALT Fentanyl Act cannot be held up any longer. Fentanyl test strips have no place in this bill.

Respectfully,

Debbie Santini
Grieving Mother
Lost Voices of Fentanyl
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[REDACTED]

Maryland