

**Senate Judiciary Committee
Subcommittee on Crime & Terrorism**

**“Defeating Fentanyl: Addressing the Deadliest Drugs Fueling the
Opioid Crisis”**

April 11, 2018

**Prepared Statement of
Chairman Chuck Grassley of Iowa**

Chairman Graham, thank you for holding this hearing today. This is an important topic and I appreciate you putting this issue front and center.

The current opioid crisis continues to be possibly the worst drug issue of our time. Every state and community around the country is affected. As this epidemic

continues, it grows more complex and more devastating. Prescription drug abuse and heroin addiction was difficult enough to deal with. Now we are facing a substance that is more powerful by several orders of magnitude: Fentanyl.

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that can be used legally as an intravenous anesthetic. Fentanyl is similar to morphine but is typically 50 to 100 times more potent. Just 2 to 3 milligrams of fentanyl can be fatal. Carfentanil, which is

another form of fentanyl and is typically used to tranquilize elephants, is nearly 10,000 times more potent than morphine.

Outside of being properly prescribed for pain management applications, fentanyl and Carfentanil have become popular on the black market as a recreational drugs. Fentanyl is often being mixed with Heroin or Cocaine – with or without the user's knowledge – in order to increase the underlying drug's

effect. Ingesting black market fentanyl alone is extremely dangerous; adding Fentanyl or one of its analogues to an already dangerous substance is often deadly.

Fentanyl is widely available throughout the United States, and its pervasiveness has had devastating effects. According to the Center for Disease Control, the death rate of synthetic opioids, which includes Fentanyl, increased by 100% from 2015

to 2016. In addition, among the more than 64,000 drug overdose deaths estimated in 2016, the sharpest increase occurred among deaths related to Fentanyl and Fentanyl analogues with over 20,000 overdose deaths.

Despite our best efforts to combat the opioid crisis, Fentanyl abuse continues to rise. Why? Because of price, availability, and demand. Fentanyl gives its users a quicker high due to its potency. In addition to a quicker high, Fentanyl is

also cheaper. Those who are addicted to opioids spend far less for Fentanyl than they would for other opioids, such as Oxycodone or Heroin. Therefore, with lower costs and high potency, Fentanyl has taken our country by storm. Drug traffickers – both within the United States and internationally – know this. Fentanyl is smuggled into our country across our Mexican and Canadian borders, and through our postal service from other countries, including mostly from China.

There are several bills that address the growing concerns of Fentanyl use, trafficking, distribution, and manufacturing. This hearing will hopefully allow us the opportunity to discuss helpful ways to address this devastating crisis and combat the growing abuse and Fentanyl.

I look forward to hearing the testimony from the witnesses and to the opportunity to question them about ways that we can fight these deadly drugs.