

To whom it may concern,

First and foremost, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to share our son's story. It has been exactly 10 months since we lost our 17-year-old son Noah Giovanni Ayala, to a synthetic opioid. Our son passed on March 17, 2024, by ingesting a pill that was offered and sold to him by a "so-called" friend. Noah was the middle child of our five children. He was the light and laughter in our home. Noah was smart, funny, caring, compassionate, and the type of kid that would give you the shirt off his back. Noah was a senior in high school and had ambitious dreams and goals in life. He took AP Honors classes, participated in the biotech program at his high school, ran track, and played football. Our son had ambitious dreams and hoped to one day become a scientist or professor.

Noah was always active in sports and played football since the age of 7. He played on a team that his dad coached. With Noah's love and passion for football he decided to coach a group of young athletes and took them to an undefeated season and all the way to the championship game. They often say that people look forward to meeting their favorite football player but to me, I was raising mine.

As a parent, you always try to protect your children. You teach them valuable life skills and share with them the dangers of this world. For us, we talked to our kids about the dangers of synthetic opioids amongst other things and yet, the opioid still managed to make its way into our home. One moment of curiosity, experimentation/ peer-pressure and our son was gone forever.

Sadly, we are living in a country where drugs are readily available anywhere and anytime. You no longer need to meet someone in an alley, you can just send a message on social media or a text message and someone can deliver the opioid to your front door. This is exactly what happened to our son Noah, he was offered and sold a pill by a "so-called" friend. Noah was a curious 17-year-old with "kid brain", he thought nothing would happen to him since he was getting the pill from a friend. Kids/Teens should be able to learn from their mistakes, not die from them.

Arizona is the number state that these drugs are coming in through. You can purchase a fentanyl pill for as little as \$1.00. No life is worth losing over \$1.00! We tend to focus so much on Fentanyl, yet we know that there are other opioids that are much more potent than Fentanyl. My question is, why do we continue to emphasize Fentanyl when we really should be focusing on "synthetic opioids" as a whole?

It took our family over 8 months to receive Noah's autopsy back. Can you imagine the pain and anguish that we lived through every day not knowing exactly what caused our

son's death? We were originally told that they believed he ingested a fentanyl pill. A few months later the police department informed us that the pills tested negative for fentanyl yet it tested positive for another synthetic opioid. It wasn't until our son's autopsy was finally released that we found out the actual name of the opioid. After doing extensive research, our son passed away from a synthetic opioid that looks to be the first confirmed death in the US from this opioid.

This epidemic has taken far too many lives and continues to grow in silent destruction. I want to remind you that over 100,000 people die each year to overdoses. These 100,000 people are not just statistics or numbers, they are people with names, faces, and families mourning the loss of their loved ones. We as a country need to stop the stigma and start taking necessary action and making these crucial changes. This is a collaborative effort, it starts with mental health, education and prevention, stopping China from manufacturing the precursors, and stopping the cartel from preying on our citizens because of a weakness that perdue pharma created.

In our last conversation with our son about his future, he expressed his unique potential saying, "I am different mom, you just wait and see. I am different". It is because of our last conversation with him, that our family has been speaking to parents and students about the dangers of opioids at schools, community forums, and spreading awareness online over these last 10 months. We vow to continue to be part of the much-needed change in order to help continue to save lives.

Thank you for listening to our family's story.

Thank you,

Vanessa Ayala

██████████@gmail.com