



**April 9, 2026**

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on the Judiciary  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Grassley,

My name is Paula Young. I write to you as the Co-Founder and President of Achieve Greatness Inc., and a National Youth Drug Awareness and Prevention Advocate, but most importantly as the mother of my son Andrew, who died four years ago from fentanyl poisoning.

Andrew was a mentor, a coach, and a leader in his community. Through basketball, he dedicated his life to guiding young people, helping them build confidence, discipline, and a sense of purpose. He coached athletes from elementary school through the college level and believed deeply that sports could change lives. Andrew also created the name, logo, and mission for Achieve Greatness, envisioning it as a program that would inspire young people to believe in themselves and pursue their full potential.

In Andrew's mind, every young person he mentored had the ability to achieve greatness.

Today, the work I do through Achieve Greatness continues the vision and purpose he started. But the truth is that this work exists because Andrew is no longer here.

Losing a child is a devastation that no parent should ever have to experience. It leaves a permanent hole in a family that can never truly be filled. Every milestone, every holiday, every ordinary day carries the painful reminder of the life that should still be unfolding. Andrew should still be here mentoring young athletes, building his future, and continuing the work he loved.

Instead, our family lives with the unimaginable reality that a single encounter with a poisoned drug supply took his life.

In the days and months after Andrew's death, back in March 2022 I began speaking publicly about what had happened to my son. At that time, I warned communities that marijuana and other substances were being laced not only with fentanyl, but also with xylazine. Four years ago many people believed that could not be possible, and as a grieving mother my warnings were often dismissed.

But I knew what had taken my son's life.

Today we know that xylazine is increasingly being mixed with fentanyl and other illicit drugs, making an already deadly drug supply even more dangerous. Unlike opioids, xylazine does not



respond to naloxone, meaning that overdoses involving this substance are far more difficult for first responders to reverse. Families are losing loved ones to substances they never intended to consume, and the risks are escalating as new and unpredictable drug combinations appear in communities across the country.

This is why action is urgently needed.

I am grateful that Congress is addressing this growing threat through the **Combating Illicit Xylazine Act**. This bipartisan legislation is an important step toward confronting the evolving drug crisis by establishing federal controls over the illicit manufacturing and distribution of xylazine and giving law enforcement the authority to track and investigate diversion into the illegal drug market.

By creating clear criminal penalties for trafficking and strengthening the ability to track suspicious distribution patterns, the legislation provides investigators with tools to identify and disrupt the criminal networks responsible for introducing these substances into our communities.

These measures matter because the drug crisis is not standing still. It is evolving faster than the systems designed to stop it.

Every delay in responding allows more dangerous substances to spread into communities, placing more families at risk of experiencing the same devastating loss that my family has endured.

As policymakers work to confront this crisis, it is essential that the voices of families with lived experience remain part of these conversations. Parents who have lost children understand the reality of this crisis in a way that statistics and reports cannot fully capture.

My son Andrew should still be here today.

Andrew's death was not an isolated tragedy. Across the United States, thousands of families are now living with the same unimaginable loss caused by an increasingly toxic and unpredictable drug supply. Behind every statistic is a son, daughter, sibling, or parent whose life was stolen too soon. For families like mine, this crisis is not an abstract policy issue. It is a daily reality of grief, unanswered questions, and the painful knowledge that so many of these deaths were preventable.

I speak about Andrew not only because he was my child, but because his story represents the countless families across this country whose lives have been forever changed by this crisis. If sharing Andrew's story, the work of Achieve Greatness, and the perspective of families directly impacted can help prevent even one other family from experiencing this loss, then his voice will continue to matter.

I would welcome the opportunity to assist the Committee in any way that may help strengthen efforts to address these dangers and protect other families from the heartbreak that we now live with every day.



Thank you for your attention to this urgent issue and for your commitment to protecting American families.

Sincerely,

Paula Young  
Co-Founder & President, Achieve Greatness Inc.  
National Youth Drug Awareness & Prevention Advocate  
Andrew's Mom

[www.achievegreatness88.org](http://www.achievegreatness88.org)