

Chairman Grassley, Ranking Member Leahy, and members of the Judiciary Committee, on behalf of my wife Jan, our son Daniel, and the thousands of families who have suffered as a result of these synthetic drugs, I want to thank you for inviting me here today.

While I am honored to speak with you I am here with a heavy heart. Yesterday was the 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our son David's death as a result of synthetic cannabinoids. So as you might understand my testimony today is difficult.

Our introduction to synthetic drugs occurred two days after our son's death. It was that evening we started to learn what happened two days earlier. Friends had purchased something called K2 at a local mall and David went to a friend's home and smoked it. After smoking the drug David started to become very agitated so they took him outside to walk him around and get some fresh air. He told the boys he felt like he was in hell. I want to stress the significance of that statement because as a Christian young man, hell represented the worse place David could imagine. This was far and away the worst, scariest, evil thing he had experienced. We later learned that rapid heart rate, increased blood pressure, terrible hallucinations and feeling like you were being chased by demons or even Satan himself is not an uncommon experience.

After a bit David seemed to be calming down and said he wanted to go home and take a nap. Prior to leaving his friends they agreed to get together later that evening and go to graduation parties. Tragically after coming home David continued to be tormented by the drug and instead of taking a nap he came home and shot himself.

We saw nothing in David to indicate he was depressed much less suicidal. He had just graduated high school and was on cloud 9, looking forward to his summer, and attending the University of Northern Iowa in the fall. The police investigation into his death also concluded David was not suicidal and that he had a severe reaction to the drug. We learned that these drugs can totally take over your mind and body and you are powerless to do anything.

I ended my testimony before the Drug Caucus in 2011 by telling them we simply are not doing enough and we are not moving quickly enough. Sadly I have the very same message for you today. We are not moving quick enough and we are not giving law enforcement and prosecutors the tools they need.

The New York Times ran a story on June 10, 2010, the day of David's funeral concerning the growing problem with K2. In response to the reporter's question about synthetic drugs becoming illegal a shop owner responded, "Once it goes illegal, I already have something to replace it with." He went on to say, "There are hundreds of these synthetics, and we just go about it a couple of them at a time." I remember thinking how ridiculous that seemed, but that is exactly what has happened.

We started with synthetic cannabinoids, then synthetic cathinones, 2C-E, MDMA, and now synthetic heroin and who knows what is next. It is quite simply quicker, easier, and most importantly cheaper to bring these synthetic drugs to market than their traditional counterparts.

Senators, the landscape of drugs in society today has forever changed. We are living in a time when bath salts are not put in your bathwater, K2 is not the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest mountain in the world, Purple Haze is not a Jimmy Hendricks song, and Ivory Snow is not soap. The people manufacturing and distributing these drugs are excellent marketers. They hide behind false advertising and have successfully used our own laws against us. Quite simply these people are murders who knowingly sell poison for financial gain.

To our knowledge David was the second death in the US tied to K2. Early on there were struggles in part because we were sometimes seen as the poor family whose son had committed suicide and we were simply trying to blame this fake pot. Imagine taking to legislators in 2010 or 2011 and telling them you want to ban Bath Salts, Ivory Snow, or computer screen cleaner because they were actually drugs being sold under false pretenses. Not an easy task. No credible person doubts the tragic consequences of these drugs today or that we have a real issue.

As we visit communities and schools throughout Iowa, and talk to others around the country, I continue to be amazed that after 6 years there are so many who have never heard of these deadly drugs. As a parent how do you talk to your kids about things you don't even know about? We need to start educating parents and our communities on the dangers of these synthetic drugs.

I know the war on drugs is not a popular phrase to use today but for those of us fighting in the trenches, I don't know what else to call it. We are in a battle for our children, grandchildren, schools, and our communities.

Senators I pray you to take action and to move quickly. Far too many families have suffered as a result of these drugs and the criminals manufacturing and distributing them. On behalf of my family and so many others I ask you to proactively provide resources for education and strengthen our laws to give law enforcement the tools they need.

I thank you for your time.