

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 29, 2024

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

As you develop your budget request for fiscal year 2025, we write to urge you to prioritize robust funding for border security and drug interdiction initiatives. Much of the fentanyl that is destroying so many communities across the Nation is being smuggled through border checkpoints. In order to meaningfully address the fentanyl crisis, law enforcement officers at our Nation's borders must be equipped to combat the flow of fentanyl and other illicit drugs. We must also support the law enforcement agencies that are investigating these smuggling and trafficking crimes and working to disrupt the transnational criminal networks that threaten our country and our communities.

The misuse of opioids has long been a public health crisis in the United States, but the situation is rapidly worsening with the proliferation of fentanyl and fentanyl analogues. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that between August 2022 and August 2023, over 112,000 people died of a drug overdose, with synthetic opioids like fentanyl involved in the vast majority of these deaths.<sup>1</sup> Another concerning aspect of this trend is the rapid increase in youth accidental overdose deaths, which more than doubled between the third quarter of 2019 and the third quarter of 2022.<sup>2</sup> A key factor in this crisis is that, due to its widespread availability and low cost, fentanyl is being mixed with other illicit drugs to increase their potency, often without the knowledge of the user. These include illegal pills, mass-produced by cartels, made to look like legitimate prescription opioids like OxyContin and Xanax. In 2023, the Drug Enforcement Administration seized more than 78 million fentanyl-laced fake pills and estimated that 70 percent contained a lethal dose of fentanyl, up from 60 percent in 2022 and 40 percent in 2021.<sup>3</sup>

The proliferation of fentanyl and increasing overdose deaths are being driven, at least in part, by trafficking activities at our borders. Most of the fentanyl entering the U.S. is trafficked through official land border crossings on the southwest border by transnational criminal organizations, including Mexican cartels. In fiscal year 2023, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) seized 240,000<sup>4</sup> pounds of drugs at the southwest land border, which included an estimated 1.1 billion doses<sup>5</sup> of fentanyl. Forty-four percent of total drug seizures and 99 percent of fentanyl seizures occurred at the southwest land border.<sup>6</sup> While transnational criminal organizations smuggle illicit

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/trends-statistics/infographics/unintentional-drug-overdose-death-rates-among-us-youth-aged-15-19>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dea.gov/onepill> and <https://www.dea.gov/alert/dea-laboratory-testing-reveals-6-out-10-fentanyl-laced-fake-prescription-pills-now-contain>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/drug-seizure-statistics>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/cbp-drugs-dosage-value-and-weight>

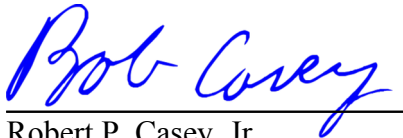
<sup>6</sup> Per [CBP data](#), in FY 2023, out of 549,000 pounds of drugs seized, 240,000 pounds were seized at the southwest land border; out of 27,000 pounds of fentanyl of seized, 26,700 pounds were seized at the southwest land border.

drugs into the U.S, they also illegally export currency from drug proceeds and firearms which they use to outgun local authorities. This illegal trade occurs at official ports of entry, alongside legitimate trade and transit, and we must do more to fortify our ports of entry and support the officers who are tasked with both intercepting this illegal trade and safeguarding our Nation.

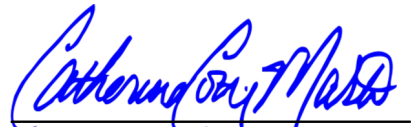
In the interest of our Nation’s public health, and to protect our youth and our communities who are increasingly being exposed to deadly drugs laced with fentanyl, we must strengthen our borders and work to eliminate the transnational criminal organizations that produce fentanyl and traffic it into our country. To do this, we must prioritize additional funding for the Department of Homeland Security for its critical border security operations. We urge you to invest in hiring CBP personnel, procuring non-intrusive inspection scanning technology, and supporting infrastructure needs at ports of entry. Officers at our ports of entry must have the resources they need to enforce our laws, interdict fentanyl and other contraband coming into the country, and seize firearms and currency leaving the country before they make it into the hands of dangerous criminals. We also urge you to make strong investments into the agencies and programs that investigate trafficking crimes and conduct broader investigations of transnational criminal organizations.

We have long supported increased funding and new policies to address the complex challenges at our southwest border. To respond to the deadly and growing plague of fentanyl entering the United States, we urge you to support strong investments in border security measures, especially personnel increases and technology upgrades, that will enhance operations along our borders and enable law enforcement officers to keep our Nation safe. Thank you for your attention to our request and these critical funding needs.

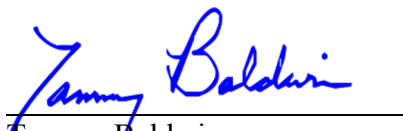
Sincerely,



Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



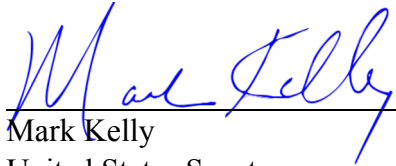
Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator




Mark Kelly  
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock  
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator

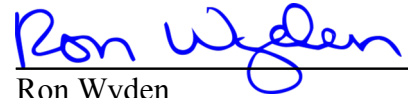


Jon Ossoff  
United States Senator



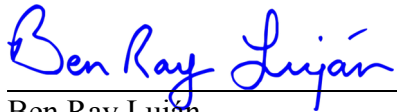
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Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator



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Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



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Ben Ray Lujan  
United States Senator