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AFTER KEY FENTANYL LEGISLATION PASSES, CANTWELL SPEAKS ON SENATE FLOOR

FEND OFF FENTANYL ACT DECLARES INTERNATIONAL FENTANYL TRAFFICKING A NATIONAL EMERGENCY, AIMS TO REDUCE FENTANYL SUPPLY BY TARGETING CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS; “THIS LEGISLATION PROVIDES THE PRESIDENT WITH NEW TOOLS TO STOP THE ILLICIT FENTANYL FLOODING OUR BORDERS,” SAYS CANTWELL

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Late last night, after the FEND Off Fentanyl Act passed the U.S. Senate as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) spoke on the floor of the Senate about the fentanyl crisis.

The FEND Off Fentanyl Act would enhance current law so U.S. government agencies can more effectively disrupt illicit opioid supply chains and penalize those facilitating the trafficking of fentanyl. It also declares international trafficking of fentanyl, and the precursors used to make it, a national emergency. The bill was included in the Senate version of the Fiscal Year 2024 NDAA, which passed with an 86-11 vote. Sen. Cantwell voted in favor of the NDAA and cosponsored the FEND Off Fentanyl Act.

“The fentanyl crisis is having a direct and dire impact on families in the state of Washington and all throughout the United States. In the past 12 months, more than 65,000 Americans have died by overdosing on synthetic opioids like fentanyl,” said Sen. Cantwell. **“A crisis of this magnitude demands a robust federal response. And that's why this legislation provides the President with new tools to stop the illicit fentanyl flooding our borders and those that are trying to transport it into our country.”**

“The bill specifically calls out eight known cartels in Mexico, which means that [the Department of the] Treasury can investigate suspicious activities involved here and declare sanctions. It recognizes that these traffickers once identified can have sanctions imposed and can have forfeiture of their property,” said Sen. Cantwell. **“According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, my state, Washington, experienced the single highest increase among US states in reported drug overdoses last year, an increase of more than 21%. Hundreds of traumatized families that will never be the same. Thousands of first responders struggling to cope with this daily tragedy that they respond to. The statistics are stunning. But they're also just very tragic.”**

Sen. Cantwell has been conducting a listening tour across Washington state to hear from people on the front lines of the fentanyl crisis. In May, Sen. Cantwell hosted a fentanyl crisis roundtable discussion in Pierce County followed by a second roundtable discussion in Snohomish County in June; earlier this month, she convened a roundtable in the Tri-Cities and a roundtable in downtown Seattle.

Drug overdose is the leading cause of accidental death in Washington state, outnumbering deaths from vehicle collisions and firearms. Data released earlier this year by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows that the State of Washington experienced the single highest increase among U.S. states in reported drug overdose deaths between February 2022 and February 2023, an increase of 21.42%.

According to the CDC, 105,258 people in the United States died of drug overdoses and drug poisonings in the 12-month period ending in February 2023 – a figure that the CDC projects will increase with additional reporting – and a staggering 67% of overdose deaths in 2022 involved synthetic opioids like fentanyl. Last month, researchers at the University of Washington reported that in 2022, fentanyl was involved in 90% of opioid overdoses in Washington state and 65% of all overdose deaths.

Now that the Senate has passed the NDAA, lawmakers must reconcile the differences between the House and Senate version of the bill before ultimately heading to the President's desk.

Video of Sen. Cantwell's speech is available [HERE](#) and audio [HERE](#).

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