

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 9, 2024

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chair  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Vice Chair Collins:

As you develop the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Homeland Security Appropriations bill, the FY 2025 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, and the FY 2025 Financial Services and General Government bill, we write to respectfully request your continued support for robust funding for border security and drug interdiction initiatives. We ask you to build upon past bipartisan investments to ensure that law enforcement officers at our Nation's borders are equipped to combat the flow of fentanyl and other illicit drugs. We also ask you to provide robust funding to support the law enforcement agencies that are investigating smuggling and trafficking crimes and working to disrupt the transnational criminal networks that threaten our country and our communities.

Substance use disorder and overdose deaths are public health crises in the United States that are being severely exacerbated by the widespread availability of fentanyl and other synthetic opioids. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that between October 2022 and October 2023, over 111,000 people died of a drug overdose, with synthetic opioids like fentanyl involved in the vast majority of these deaths.<sup>1</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>2</sup>

The proliferation of fentanyl and associated overdose deaths are being driven in part by trafficking activities at our borders. Data indicates that most of the fentanyl entering the U.S. is trafficked through official ports of entry, and between February 2023 and February 2024, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) seized 1.3 billion doses of fentanyl at official ports of entry.<sup>3</sup> It is imperative that officers at ports of entry are equipped with sufficient resources to continue fighting against fentanyl while also managing the flow of lawful trade and travel.

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

<sup>2</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>3</sup> <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/cbp-drugs-dosage-value-and-weight>

As you develop the FY 2025 Homeland Security Appropriations bill, we urge you to prioritize all funding streams for the Department of Homeland Security that will improve general operations and drug interdiction capabilities along the U.S. border and at ports of entry, particularly funding for CBP's Office of Field Operations for personnel and technology at ports of entry. This includes funding to support personnel costs, such as hiring additional CBP officers and support staff, expanding training programs for employees, and increasing wages and bonuses for employees. This also includes funding for advanced technology at ports of entry, such as for continued procurement and deployment of non-intrusive inspection systems that scan vehicles to provide detailed images of their interiors, for continued development of anomaly detection algorithms that can analyze these images, and for all other technology needs associated with this effort.

To meaningfully address fentanyl trafficking at our borders, we must also address the illegal trafficking of firearms and currency, which flow out of our country to enrich and empower dangerous transnational criminal organizations. We ask you to include robust funding for CBP's Office of Field Operations for outbound inspections projects at ports of entry to ensure that law enforcement officers at the border can thoroughly and safely inspect vehicles leaving the U.S. and seize illegal contraband. We must ensure that CBP has sufficient funding for non-intrusive inspection technology for outbound inspections, along with funding for infrastructure projects such as dedicated outbound inspection lanes and traffic calming measures to keep CBP officers safe from approaching vehicles when they conduct outbound inspections. We also ask you to support CBP in setting up a formal outbound inspections program within the Office of Field Operations headquarters by providing any funding that is necessary for this effort.

In addition to providing increased resources to law enforcement officers at our Nation's borders, we must also support and expand broader governmental efforts to investigate trafficking crimes and transnational criminal organizations, along with the illicit financial networks that sustain them. We ask you to support funding for personnel for Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the arm of U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement that focuses on transnational criminal organizations, along with any other funding needs of HSI related to their recent Strategy for Combatting Illicit Opioids. We also ask you to support these investigative efforts as you develop the FY 2025 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill by making strong investments into the Department of Justice programs and agencies that conduct these investigations, such as the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces Program, which conducts long-term investigations of transnational criminal organizations at the enterprise level. Finally, as you develop the FY 2025 Financial Services and General Government Appropriations bill, we ask you to support robust funding for the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Program, which provides funding to law enforcement agencies operating in critical drug-trafficking regions of the United States.

We have long supported increased funding and new policies to address the complex challenges at our borders. 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 and investigations of transnational criminal organizations. These efforts 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.

Thank you for your consideration.

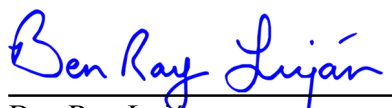
Sincerely,



Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator



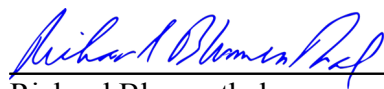
Ben Ray Lujan  
United States Senator



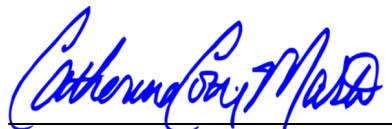
Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



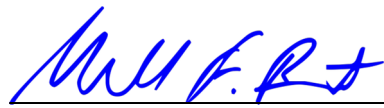
Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator



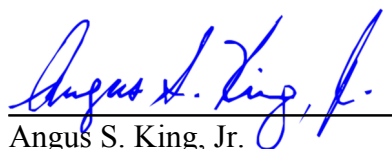
Raphael Warnock  
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator




Maria Cantwell  
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Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator



Mark Kelly  
United States Senator