



# ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

SHERIFF-CORONER DON BARNES

## OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

April 7, 2022

The Honorable Scott DesJarlais  
United States House of Representatives  
2304 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

### **RE: Stop Fentanyl Border Crossings Act**

Dear Congressman DesJarlais:

I am writing in support of your *Stop Fentanyl Border Crossings Act*. In my view, the drug epidemic is our nation's most significant long-term public health and safety crisis. Ending this crisis requires us to address both the supply and demand for these illicit substances. Your legislation will significantly help in the effort to reduce the supply by stopping the flow of drugs across our border.

This biggest illustration of this crisis is the mounting number of deaths. As you are aware, for the first time in a 12-month period, nationwide drug-related deaths exceeded 100,000. Between April 2020 and April 2021 a total of 100,306 Americans lost their life to a drug-related death. The biggest component of that 100,306 deaths are synthetic opioids, specifically fentanyl. In my county, the total number of fentanyl deaths was 37 in 2016. By 2021 our total fentanyl deaths was 693 (with 62 cases still pending as of March 21, 2022). According to the California Department of Health, statewide fentanyl deaths increased over 2,200% in the last five years. From June 2015 to June 2016 the number of fentanyl-related deaths was 201. Five years later the total the total number of statewide deaths increased to 4,766 in the period of June 2020 to June 2021. These tragic statistics underscore the need for action.

My agency has dedicated significant resources to seizing drugs in the Southern California Region. Specific to fentanyl, in 2021 Orange County Sheriff's Department investigators seized 104.6 pounds of fentanyl and 16,278 pills. The rapid influx of this drug across our borders is illustrated by the fact that in just the first two months of 2022 we seized 205.5 pounds of suspected fentanyl and 143,127 pills suspected to contain some level of fentanyl.

While my agency and local partners will not let up in our effort to seize these drugs our resources are overwhelmed. As the bipartisan Commission on Combating Synthetic Opioid Trafficking stated in their February 2022 report, the main source of the fentanyl coming into our country is from across our southern border. The Cartels are using our weakened border security to their advantage. The pending expiration of Title 42 next month will only further exacerbate our challenge, as it will expand the Cartels access to our communities.

The *Stop Fentanyl Border Crossings Act* keeps important provisions of Title 42 in place. The Act's provisions will apply Title 42 to the fentanyl public health crisis that has been fueled by the open pathways to trafficking at our border. The proposed Act will insure our federal law enforcement agencies have the necessary authority to stop border crossings and limit the Cartel's access to our country.

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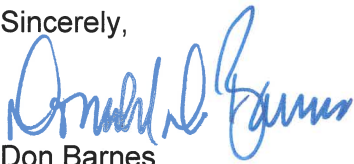
[www.ocsd.org](http://www.ocsd.org)

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Ending our drug crises requires a multi-pronged strategy that includes education about the dangers of drugs for our youth, treatment for those who are suffering from addiction, and tough enforcement against those who profit by putting American lives at risk. With over three decades of law enforcement experience I know that the best strategy for enforcement is the interdiction of drugs at their source. *The Stop Fentanyl Border Crossings Act* is needed legislation that will bolster the needed enforcement component.

Thank you for your continued efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Don Barnes", is written over the word "Sincerely,".

Don Barnes  
Sheriff-Coroner