

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:  
APPROPRIATIONS  
COMMERCE  
HEALTH, EDUCATION,  
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

November 16, 2023

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am encouraged that you will use the occasion of the APEC Economic Leaders' forum to meet with Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador. I hope that the discussion will enhance our bilateral relationship, including managing migration at our shared border and spurring additional hemispheric cooperation to address the international factors contributing to unprecedented growth of migration. I urge you to use this opportunity to ensure President López Obrador understands the deadly impact of international fentanyl trafficking on Wisconsin and the role that his country must play in saving American lives.

Between fiscal years 2021-2023, fentanyl seizures at our Southwest border increased by more than 150%.<sup>1</sup> The flood of fentanyl into our country from Mexico has had devastating consequences for communities across Wisconsin. Between 2019 and 2021, fentanyl overdose deaths in Wisconsin grew by 97%, and in 2022, nearly 1,400 families lost a loved one to opioid overdose or poisoning.<sup>2</sup> To save lives in Wisconsin, we must stop illicit fentanyl at its source. While cartels appear to be feeling the pressure of U.S. sanctions and law enforcement,<sup>3</sup> Wisconsin families and law enforcement should not be forced to shoulder the burden of Mexico's failure to prevent illicit fentanyl production and trafficking within its own borders.

That is why I am proud that the FEND Off Fentanyl Act was included in the Senate-passed FY24 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The FEND Off Fentanyl Act would declare a national emergency regarding the international trafficking of fentanyl and combat our country's

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Drug Seizures, US Border Patrol (USBP) and Office of Field Operations (OFO), Weight (lbs) and Count of Drug Seizure Events by Fiscal Year (FY), at: <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/drug-seizure-statistics>.

<sup>2</sup> Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Public Health Advisory: Fentanyl Increasingly Present in Overdose Deaths in Wisconsin, at: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/opioids/ph-advisory.htm>; Max Stapleton & Grace Friedman, "'They die so quickly': Fentanyl killing 1,000+ people in Wisconsin each year," at: <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2023/06/fentanyl-wisconsin-opioid-overdose-deaths/>.

<sup>3</sup> See José de Córdoba, "Mexican Sinaloa Cartel's Message to Members: Stop Making Fentanyl or Die," at: <https://www.wsj.com/world/americas/mexican-sinaloa-cartels-message-to-members-stop-making-fentanyl-or-die-b96d3e09>; Justice Department Announces Charges Against Sinaloa Cartel's Global Operation, at: <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-announces-charges-against-sinaloa-cartel-s-global-operation>; Treasury Sanctions Three Notoriously Violent Sinaloa Cartel Operators, at: <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy1680>.

fentanyl crisis by targeting the illicit fentanyl supply chain, including chemical suppliers in China and cartels that traffic the drugs from Mexico. By strengthening current law and directing the Treasury Department to target, sanction, and block the financial assets of transnational criminal organizations, the FEND Off Fentanyl Act aims to stop the flow of deadly fentanyl into our country by choking off the income source of those who traffic in synthetic opioids. I am also glad that the FY24 NDAA acknowledges that transnational criminal organizations have established effective control over significant areas of Mexico, thereby enabling the development of fentanyl production and trafficking infrastructure, and directs the Secretary of Defense to enhance cooperation with defense officials in Mexico to target, disrupt, and degrade transnational criminal organizations within Mexico that traffic fentanyl.

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I am working to fulfill the Administration's domestic and national security supplemental requests in bipartisan legislation that includes necessary investments in programs to both disrupt fentanyl trafficking and help those struggling with substance use disorder. I support the national security supplemental's request for \$1.2 billion to crack down on the trafficking of dangerous and lethal illicit drugs, including hiring an additional 1,300 border agents and deploying new detection equipment will disrupt the flow of fentanyl into the country, and the domestic supplemental request for \$1.55 billion HHS Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration State Opioid Response grants to provide treatment, harm reduction, and recovery support services in all States and territories.

While these measures and investments will strengthen our nation's ability to fight against the flow of fentanyl in the future, we cannot afford to wait. The United States and Mexico share a nearly 2,000 mile border and, along with it, a shared responsibility to ensure that the criminal production and trafficking of fentanyl in Mexico does not harm Americans and American interests. I urge you to impress upon President López Obrador his nation's obligation to stem the flow of fentanyl into the United States and to secure commitments for additional defense and law enforcement cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tammy Baldwin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator