

MARK E. GREEN, M.D.

7TH DISTRICT, TENNESSEE

CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON  
HOMELAND SECURITY

COMMITTEE ON  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

2446 RAYBURN BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515  
(202) 225-2811

305 PUBLIC SQUARE  
SUITE 212  
FRANKLIN, TN 37064  
(629) 223-6050

128 N. SECOND STREET  
SUITE 104  
CLARKSVILLE, TN 37040  
(931) 266-4483

March 1, 2023

Dr. Rochelle Walensky  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
395 E. Street, S.W., Suite 9100  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Director Walensky,

In recent years, drug overdose deaths in the United States have skyrocketed as powerful narcotics have proliferated throughout our nation. According to the CDC's provisional counts, drug overdose deaths increased dramatically beginning in 2020, rising from an estimated 72,151 deaths in 2019 to approximately 107,622 in 2021. Fentanyl and related synthetic opioids have driven this increase, accounting for over 71,000 of all overdose deaths in 2021.

America's southern border is a key vector for the influx of fentanyl and fentanyl-related substances. Our border patrol officers are overwhelmed with the volume of encounters they are making, and our ports of entry are understaffed, creating ample opportunity for cartels to smuggle drugs into the country. At the Nogales port of entry in Arizona, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers seized 1.5 million fentanyl pills in a single week in December. Additionally, in October, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced they had seized 17,584 pounds of methamphetamine and 388.93 pounds of fentanyl from a single trailer at the Otay Mesa port of entry in California. Since October, CBP has seized over 8,600 pounds of fentanyl – enough to kill the entire U.S. population several times over.

Unfortunately, these seizures of narcotics represent only a fraction of the total supply that is being trafficked and distributed throughout the nation with lethal consequences. As Chairman of the Homeland Security Committee, one of my top priorities is addressing the flow of fentanyl that is being smuggled into this country and devastating countless communities across the nation.

This is a crisis, and it is of critical importance that policymakers have timely data to inform our efforts to investigate and address this epidemic that is taking the lives of hundreds of Americans every day. The latest provisional count provided by the CDC is from the 12-month period ending September 2022. It has now been five months since any new data has been published. This lack of timely data hinders the ability of Congress to gain a clear understanding of the drug epidemic and how it is evolving.

Accordingly, I request that your agency provide my office with the latest provisional data and estimates on drug overdose deaths from 2022, specifically for fentanyl, fentanyl-related substances, and synthetic opioids by March 31, 2023. As part of this, please include an estimated total for the number of deaths from fentanyl and fentanyl-related substances that occurred in the 2022 calendar year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark E. Green". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chairman Mark E. Green, M.D.  
House Committee on Homeland Security