Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 11, 2022

Dear Law Enforcement Officers:

The United States is experiencing an unprecedented overdose epidemic fueled largely by illicit fentanyl flowing across our borders. According to the CDC, the United States recorded its highest ever number of drug-overdose deaths in a 12-month period from April 2020 to April 2021. This epidemic is dramatically affecting our teens—in Arizona, fentanyl is the number one killer of teenagers. Republican members of the House Committees on Oversight and Reform and Energy and Commerce are investigating this unprecedented increase in overdose deaths to ensure this crisis does not continue. We are calling on you to provide any anecdotes or information regarding illicit drugs and particularly fentanyl, which can be shared confidentially at the email address below.

Synthetic opioids, mainly fueled by fentanyl, accounted for about 64 percent of all drug overdose deaths through April 2021—up 49 percent from the same period last year.³ Fentanyl can be 50 times more potent than heroin and 100 times more potent than morphine.⁴ The production and supply of illicit fentanyl into the U.S. market is increasingly driven by Mexican cartels and China remains a main source of supply for precursor chemicals—used to make dangerous drugs that cartels illegally smuggle into the country in large amounts.⁵ In Fiscal Year 2021, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection seized more than 11,000 pounds of fentanyl crossing the southern border—a 42 percent increase over Fiscal Year 2020, with the vast majority discovered coming through ports of entry.⁶ This figure amounts to enough fentanyl to cause approximately 2.5 billion deaths.⁷

The Republican members of the House Committees on Oversight and Reform and Energy and Commerce are dedicated to fighting this crisis at the border and related crimes. If you are on the frontlines of this crisis and have information about how the increased flow of fentanyl into the United States is impacting communities around the U.S., please contact the House Oversight

¹ Jon Kamp & Julie Wernau, *Drug Overdose Deaths, Fueled by Fentanyl, Hit Record High in U.S.*, THE WALL St. J. (Nov. 17, 2021).

² Emily Crane, Fentanyl now leading cause of death among teens in Arizona border county, N.Y. POST (Oct. 8, 2021).

³ Jon Kamp & Julie Wernau, *Drug Overdose Deaths, Fueled by Fentanyl, Hit Record High in U.S.*, THE WALL ST. J. (Nov. 17, 2021); Deidre McPhillips, *Drug overdose deaths top 100,000 annually for the first time, driven by fentanyl, CDC data show*, CNN (Nov. 17, 2021).

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Fentanyl Facts*, https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/fentanyl.html (last visited Dec. 14, 2021).

⁵ *Id.*, at 14-16 (Mar. 2021); *see also*, Press Release, U.S. Drug Enforcement Admin., *DEA Releases 2020 National Drug Threat Assessment* (Mar. 2, 2021).

⁶ Drug Seizure Statistics, U.S. CUSTOMS & BORDER PROTECTION (last visited Nov. 19, 2021); Southwest Land Border Encounters, U.S. CUSTOMS & BORDER PROTECTION (last visited Nov. 19, 2021).

⁷ New Border Numbers: A Year of Chaos & Crisis, HOMELAND SECURITY REPUBLICANS (Oct. 25, 2021).

and Reform Committee and House Energy and Commerce Committee Republican staff's confidential tip line at fentanyltips@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

James Comer Ranking Member

Committee on Oversight and Reform

Cathy McMorris Rodgers

Ranking Member

Committee on Energy and Commerce