

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 13, 2023

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Mr. Speaker,

Every day, countless Americans fall victim to the devastating substance use crisis that has plagued states across our nation – including my home state of Oregon. Fentanyl and other highly-addictive, synthetic opioids accounted for nearly 88% of all opioid-involved deaths in 2021, up by more than 22% from 2020 to 2021.<sup>1</sup> In Oregon alone, the amount of seized fentanyl in high intensity drug trafficking areas increased from 690 counterfeit pills in 2018 to more than 2 million in 2022.<sup>2</sup> And the ineffective implementation of voter-driven state laws, like Measure 110, have only made matters worse as treatment options remain elusive for those most in need of help.

The opioid and fentanyl crisis is not confined to Oregon. According to the California Department of Public Health, California's opioid-related deaths spiked 121% between 2019 and 2021.<sup>3</sup> In Kern County, 252 individuals – many of whom were your constituents – succumbed to fentanyl-related deaths in 2022, more than double what the community suffered in 2020.<sup>4</sup>

Clearly, stemming the flow of these drugs into our communities is a mutual, bipartisan imperative. And, as you know, the annual Appropriations Process is one of our best opportunities to deliver critical funding to the organizations and agencies on the frontlines of this fight. Yet sadly, this process has been needlessly politicized by certain individuals who would rather notch political victories than policy ones.

Injecting the FY 2024 Defense Appropriations Bill, and other key funding bills, with anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ and anti-choice riders isn't just morally reprehensible – it's downright dangerous. It diminishes the likelihood of this bill's passage, jeopardizing much-needed funds and resources that could be put to good use in the most at-risk

---

<sup>1</sup> "[Opioid Overdose](#)," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (2021).

<sup>2</sup> "[Fentanyl Facts](#)," Oregon Health Authority, (2022).

<sup>3</sup> "[California's opioid deaths increased by 121% in 3 years. What's driving the crisis?](#)," Cal Matters, (2023).

<sup>4</sup> "[Kern saw record high of fentanyl deaths in 2022: Coroner's office](#)," KGET, (2023).

communities. Specifically, the FY 2024 Defense Appropriations Bill includes \$1.16 billion for the drug interdiction and counterdrug activities account, which is \$275 million above President Biden's Budget Request.<sup>5</sup> However, by tethering divisive political issues to this legislation, members of the far-right Freedom Caucus are hampering our ability to quickly deliver these critical funds.

The fentanyl crisis knows no political or state boundaries. It harms people of all backgrounds, beliefs, ages, and identities. Even our children are not immune from the dangers of this drug. In Oregon, this is especially true as the rate of teenagers killed by drug overdose continues to grow faster than any other state.<sup>6</sup> Now more than ever, we must unite behind bold, bipartisan efforts to curb the spread of fentanyl and the synthetic opioids at the heart of this disturbing trend. Congress cannot afford to delay – nor can it afford to be hijacked by partisan extremists who stand in the way of progress.

I would be glad to meet with you to discuss this vital issue at your earliest convenience. Our children are counting on us to meet this moment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrea Salinas". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Andrea Salinas  
Member of Congress

---

<sup>5</sup> [“Fiscal Year 2024 Defense Appropriations Bill,”](#) House Appropriations Republicans, (2023).

<sup>6</sup> [“State inaction left Oregon teens vulnerable to fentanyl’s fatal spread,”](#) The Lund Report, (2023).