

**DEA 2024 National Family Summit on Fentanyl
Washington D.C.
Administrator Anne Milgram
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Remarks as Delivered

Thank you, Sean. Good morning. It is such a privilege to be with you with here today. I'm so grateful to each and every single one of you, so many of you have traveled from far and you have traveled filled with love and hope and resilience and today is an important day for us to be together and to keep going in this fight.

I want to start by saying a moment of thanks to the Attorney General, Merrick Garland. What you see here is what I have the privilege of seeing every single day and have had the privilege of seeing every day for the last three and a half years. He is a fantastic boss, and in my view, the best boss is someone who supports you, who pushes you, and gives you the tools and the resources you need to be effective in your job. And that is what he has done for the Drug Enforcement Administration every single day so thank you so much.

We are gathered here today because every single one of us has been impacted by fentanyl in our communities. This issue is not distant. It's personal. It's in our homes. It's in our neighborhoods. It's in our communities. And yet today we also have reason to feel hopeful about the work that we are doing, about our progress, and about the lives that we are saving. The most important thing that I want you to walk away from today with, is knowing this – you are making a difference. You are making a difference. Every single day through the work that you are doing, through the conversations that you are having, through the schools you are visiting, it matters, and you are making a difference. You are saving lives.

Thank you for your work and thank you for this partnership.

Today, I want to talk a little bit about how DEA can do more, how we can learn from you, and how we can expand on our partnership together, and how we can save more lives in our country. I want to be clear as I have said every year for the last three years, that this is a fight. This is a fight. This is a fight to save lives, and this fight is winnable. I'm going to say that again, because I know that all of you have days that are hard where it is tough to get out of bed and to go to that school or to talk to that community group. I want you to know that this fight is winnable.

And I feel hopeful today because I know we are making a difference. The CDC has reported that between June of 2023 and June of 2024, that we have seen more than a 14% drop in the number of Americans that are dying from fentanyl and methamphetamine poisonings and overdoses. To put that in language that all of us understand and care about, that means that

there are 14,063 fewer deaths in the United States of America. 14,063. And a decline like this is not just a statistic, it is not just a number. It's lives that have been saved. It is parents that do not have to bury their children. It is brothers and sisters and friends that do not have to mourn. It is communities that did not have to experience another tragedy. And it is someone, or maybe it is 14,063 someone's who were given a second chance. So you are making a difference, and I think that is something we all need to hold on to today as a reminder of what we are doing here, why we do the work we do together, and that everything we are doing matters. But that's not all. I also want to share with you some other progress that I believe that we're making and about how far we've come.

Just over a year ago, as DEA seizes fake pills that look like real medicines across the United States, as we seize those pills we test them. We have ten labs across the United States with chemists who do an extraordinary job, and we test every single pill that we possibly can to understand what's in it, how is it made, and how we can better understand how the cartels are operating. We also test it to understand how much fentanyl is in that pill. A year ago when our chemists were testing those pills, for every ten pills they tested seven out of those ten was deadly. It contained two milligrams or more of fentanyl. That is a deadly dose. As all of you know, that is the amount of fentanyl that fits on the tip of a pencil, and that amount is the difference between life and death. Too many of you know that that tiny amount can take a life in an instant.

And here's the important news. Because of the hard work and dedication of the women and men of the Drug Enforcement Administration, and because of all of you, the pills that we are seizing this year, of those ten it is now five that contain a deadly dose. So, we have gone from seven out of ten being lethal to five out of ten being lethal. Now, we should all be clear that five out of ten pills being lethal is awful and we should not accept that. But it is significant progress in our fight to save lives, because it means that for every ten pills on the street, two fewer are deadly today.

And I want to note, that I believe that a big part of why we are seeing this decline is because of the pressure that we are putting on the two cartels in Mexico – the Sinaloa and the Jalisco cartels. As the Attorney General just said we are putting pressure on their entire criminal networks starting with the supply chain of chemicals in China, going to Mexico where we are targeting the manufacturers; the labs, the people transporting those chemicals and making fentanyl, pressing the fentanyl into pills, bringing it into the United States where we are targeting the drug traffickers, the people selling drugs on the streets and on social media and then we are also targeting the illicit finance, the people who are getting the dirty money back to Mexico. That pressure is changing the way the cartels operate. It's changing the way the cartels operate. And it is making a difference. As all of you know over the last three years we've taken action across every part of those two criminal networks, every part for the first

time in DEA history. As the AG noted, we charged twenty Chinese chemical companies and twenty eight Chinese nationals with fentanyl trafficking for the very first time.

When I started at DEA a little more than three years ago, there were seven leaders of the Sinaloa cartel that were at liberty in Mexico. They were free. They were living their lives in Mexico without fear of being held accountable for what they were doing. Today, four of those seven leaders are in custody and three are about to go to trial and face justice in the United States of America. And as I've said to many of the folks in this room, targeting the whole network works. It works for us to get the leaders. It works for us to stop the supply of chemicals. And it works for us to get the people who are selling drugs on the streets of America.

Over the last three years we have also put resources and invested heavily in something we call OD Justice. We now have OD Justice operations across the United States in every single one of our field divisions. And what that means is we partner with local and state law enforcement to investigate drug poisoning and overdose deaths. Since 2023, we have done five, almost five hundred of those investigations. We have brought more cases in federal court than ever before in the last year, and we have partnered with so many of you in this room to do that work. I want to express my deep gratitude because I know that when you walk in that room, whether it's a family summit or whether you bring a DEA agent to a community meeting or a school, you are helping us to build trust in communities that let people feel comfortable to walk in the room and to help us do the work that can bring justice.

And it is so important for me to say to you altogether what I've said to many of you privately, I know that your individual quest to bring justice for your loved ones loss is more, it is critical for your loved one, it is also making a difference in our communities; you are stopping the next pill from being sold to the next person who may lose a life. So you are doing an incredible public service by being advocates, by working to have these cases brought, and DEA, as Frank Tarentino said so beautifully yesterday, we are here to listen and to help wherever we can.

Now, I want to talk just for a minute about the One Pill Can Kill campaign and public awareness, because I do believe, as I said last night, that there are three reasons we are seeing a significant drop in American deaths. The first is you. It's your advocacy. It is the DEA's One Pill Can Kill campaign that we make available to any person, anywhere in the United States that wants to use it. It is the work that you are doing in schools, it is the commitment to make sure that every American knows that fentanyl kills, and it is being hidden intentionally in other drugs and in fake pills that look like real medicines. The work you do day-in-and-day - out is saving lives. The second piece of why I think we're seeing a reduction in drug deaths is the enforcement work that's happening throughout the entire criminal network. And the last of course, is our public health work and our public health partners for expanding naloxone and medication for substance use and opioid use disorder across the United States. We still

know that far too many people do not understand the dangers of fentanyl, and that is why we want to partner even more with you than we have before to expand and spread the word. The conversations you are having are powerful and they're conversations that are being repeated over and over across the United States, and we are starting to see a cultural shift. We are just starting to see a cultural shift. So many of you have told me that today when you walk in a room, you used to say - who in the room has heard of fentanyl? And maybe one or two hands would go up. I personally was in a room with high school students recently where I asked that question, every single hand went up. It's the first time it had ever happened to me. And it's because of you, it is because of the work you are doing in your communities, and we cannot stop doing that work. It is saving lives. And we need to move beyond the stigma into a world where we are open to talking about the harm that we are experiencing and that we are seeing in our communities. And we need to keep building on this awareness. So together we are making progress. What does it mean? Here's what it means, to me, standing here having had the privilege to lead the DEA for more than three years, it means that we do more. It means that we double down. It means that we go harder, and we think bigger about how we stop any American dying from fentanyl. It is how we recommit today to the promise that every American understands that fentanyl kills. It is how we recommit today, from our Chief of Operations to our Special Agents in Charge, to taking out the entire criminal network, to stopping even a single chemical from coming out of China and going to Mexico. It is how we recommit today to saying that naloxone should be available across the United States of America - in schools, in libraries, in any public space at sports stadiums, anywhere you can think of - naloxone should be there. It is how we recommit today to this partnership together that is working, that we can expand, and we can make even more of a difference in the lives of Americans. Because the reality is that even one life lost is too many.

And we have more to do. So today I'm also announcing, as Sean Ferns teased last night, something that came out of our family summit last year. One of the things that many of you said to me was: why do we do this just one day of the year? And we do our regional summits now. Every year we are in every part of the United States, each of our field divisions is holding regional summits, and I can tell you that when I travel across the United States, our special agents, our intel analysts, our diversion investigators, tell me how much they value those days with you. They value them. But the question many of you asked is how can we do more every single day? And so we want to answer that question by launching a network that will connect us all each and every single day. We've named it the Together for Families Network. It is already up on our website www.dea.gov/togetherforfamilies and we want you to become a part of this network, and here's what it means. What it means is we need to find a way every single day for any family in the United States to be able to connect with their local DEA office - if they need help or they want to have their case investigated. It means we need to build a bridge for resources for families, whether it's for substance use disorder, for treatment, or it's to understand how to get help for a loved one. We want that bridge to exist, and we want

every single person in this room to become a part of this network, because I see real time you helping one another. We want to be able to connect families when people reach out to us for speaking engagements, we want to be able to connect with each and every single one of you and people across the United States. Sean Fearn can answer more questions about it later, but if we haven't gotten it exactly the way you want us to do it, tell us and we'll make it better. We'll make it better.

Looking to the future, I want us today to keep in mind all the lives lost, and the lives saved, the progress made and the goals we have yet to reach. Together as we gather here, we're not just talking about programs or networks or numbers. We are talking about lives. We are talking about your loved ones. We're talking about family members. We are talking about the goal of an America with no lives lost from fentanyl poisoning and overdose. Each of you is an important part of our mission and of our team at DEA, and a part of our work together to stop the harm.

You, each of you, inspires me. I want just to add a personal note, thank you for everything you do. You give me hope. You give me inspiration. And to the men and women of DEA who are in the room - I tell them this behind closed doors all the time, but I will say it publicly - I love you. There's no better group of men and women in the United States of America. There is not, who cares more, who works harder, who takes the mission to heart and achieve that mission every single day, so it has been a privilege to be with them for the last three plus years.

Now today let's get to work. Let's go harder. Let's go farther. Let's dream bigger and let's get some work done. Thank you.