



Sen. Gillibrand Discusses Senate Fentanyl Trafficking Bill In Putnam

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Senator Kirsten Gillibrand visited the Philipstown Town Hall Friday to announce Senate passage of her FEND Off Fentanyl Act, legislation that would help reduce fentanyl overdoses.

No community has been left untouched by the deadly impacts, she said.

"Just last year, the DEA seized enough deadly doses of fentanyl in New York for more than three times the state's population," Gillibrand said. "The bipartisan FEND Off Fentanyl Act would target both cartels and individuals involved in producing and trafficking these dangerous drugs. It will better empower the government to sanction drug traffickers and combat money laundering schemes that make this trade profitable. We have lost far too many lives to fentanyl overdoses and I am committed to working with my colleagues in Congress to keep our communities safe."

Gillibrand was joined by Congressman Mike Lawler, State Senator Rob Rolison, Putnam County Executive Kevin Byrne, Putnam County Legislator Nancy Montgomery, Village of Cold Spring Police Department Officer in Charge Larry Burke, and St. Christopher's Inn Executive Director Dr. James Schiller.

"The opioid epidemic remains the public health crisis of our lifetime, and the pervasiveness of fentanyl in communities across the country has only exasperated the problem. We cannot continue to allow drug cartels and other bad actors to get away with profiting off murdering hundreds of thousands of Americans. I thank the Senator for coming to Putnam County and for her efforts to further raise awareness about this critical issue," Byrne said.

"Putnam County is committed to continuing to provide resources for treatment, recovery, education, and enforcement, but our enforcement measures are only so effective in the face of a multi-billion dollar drug trafficking industry. We need more federal action supporting the D.E.A. & I.C.E. as much of this poison is sourced from our nation's southern border. Here at home, we will continue to work towards reducing the overall demand of these harmful drugs so the supply lines become less powerful, but we cannot be blind to what they are doing and cannot allow these criminal organizations to operate as they have."

Most illegal fentanyl entering the United States is made with Chinese precursor chemicals and manufactured in Mexico. This bill will empower the U.S. government to go after the cartels bringing it into the United States and those producing and shipping the precursor materials. It

also enhances sanctions enforcement and gives the Treasury Department tools to combat fentanyl-related money laundering, Gillibrand said.

"Philipstown continues to lose family members and loved ones. Fentanyl hit the streets in the Hudson Valley in 2013 and continues to wreak havoc on our tiny little community," Montgomery said. "The number one question my constituents ask 'is why can't we go after the individuals producing and trafficking fentanyl?' Our hearts are broken and our hands have been tied until now. I am beyond grateful that Senator Gillibrand is bringing this important bipartisan legislation to the table."

The bill now goes to the House of Representatives to be reconciled with the bill H.R.3333.

"Fentanyl has had a devastating impact on hundreds of thousands of families across the country over the last few years, which is why I'm proud to be taking the fight to fentanyl head-on," Lawler said after the news conference. "The FEND Off Fentanyl Act is a demonstration of our commitment to cracking down on those trafficking fentanyl in a bipartisan way."

"In combination with my recently introduced Fentanyl Kills Act, which would charge those who traffic fentanyl with attempted murder, I believe we can make a real dent in preventing this poison from taking more lives in the Hudson Valley," Lawler said. "Between these pieces of legislation and strategic investments in recovery services and organizations that tackle substance use disorder, we can finally begin to win this fight."

According to the Cato Institute, fentanyl is not, contrary to popular belief, brought into the country by migrants. In an article titled "Fentanyl Is Smuggled for U.S. Citizens By U.S. Citizens, Not Asylum Seekers" the libertarian think-tank pointed out that fentanyl smuggling is ultimately funded by U.S. consumers who pay for illicit opioids, nearly 99 percent of whom are citizens; and that U.S. citizens were 86.3 percent of convicted fentanyl drug traffickers in 2021 — 10 times greater than convictions of illegal immigrants for the same offense.

In 2022 Border Patrol agents arrested a U.S. citizen at a border crossing near San Diego after a drug-sniffing dog alerted them to bundles concealed in a pickup truck's spare tire and gas tank. The bundles contained 250 lbs. of fentanyl pills, with an estimated street value of \$3,68 million. (U.S. Customs and Border Protection) .

The FEND Off Fentanyl Act would:

1. Declare the international trafficking of fentanyl a national emergency.
2. Require the president to sanction transnational criminal organizations and drug cartels' key members engaged in international fentanyl trafficking.
3. Enable the president to use proceeds of forfeited, sanctioned property of fentanyl traffickers to further law enforcement efforts.
4. Enhance the ability to enforce sanctions violations, making it more likely that people who defy U.S. law will be caught and prosecuted.

5. Require the administration to report to Congress on actions the U.S. government is taking to reduce the international trafficking of fentanyl and related opioids.
6. Allow the Treasury Department to utilize special measures to combat fentanyl-related money laundering.
7. Require the Treasury Department to prioritize fentanyl-related suspicious transactions and include descriptions of drug cartels' financing actions in Suspicious Activity Reports.