



**Ranking Member Mike Braun’s Opening Statement**  
***“Understanding a Growing Crisis: Substance Use Trends Among Older Adults”***

Today we are shining a light on older Americans, who can be easily overlooked when it comes to substance use.

This Committee most recently held a hearing on substance use in 2018.

Since that hearing, a new threat has emerged: synthetics. The CDC found a 53 percent increase in overdose death rates to synthetics like fentanyl among older Americans.

One of our witnesses today, Dr. Humphreys, has research showing that overdose deaths among older Americans quadrupled over the last two decades, and synthetics like fentanyl are contributing.

We’ve taken steps to support treatment and services for older Americans struggling with addiction and opioids.

On Tuesday, the HELP Committee marked up a bill I co-led with Senators Markey and Paul, the Modernizing Opioid Treatment Access Act.

This bill will expand patients’ access to methadone, a vital medication for treating opioid use disorder, by scrapping outdated prescription rules.

It will help individuals with opioid use disorder of all ages, and their loved ones.

In Indiana, Centerstone, a non-profit treatment and service provider, is now finding that synthetics are prolific among the older Americans it serves.

While these drugs don’t kill older Americans at the same rate as younger ones, age isn’t a shield against synthetics like fentanyl.

Synthetics are surging in counterfeit pills.

The Drug Enforcement Administration reported in October that seven out of every ten pills it seizes now contain a lethal dose of fentanyl. One pill can kill.

They have seized a record-breaking 86 million fentanyl pills in 2023.

We need to sound the alarm about how synthetics like fentanyl can poison older Americans' drugs.

There are also many more grandparents raising their grandchildren because parents have died from synthetics overdoses.

Fentanyl and other drugs have lowered American life expectancy.

They increasingly kill older Americans while limiting younger Americans' chances to grow old.

We can't fight this crisis without reducing supply. That means countering China's chemical production and Mexican cartels to stop them from poisoning thousands of Americans.

It means finally getting serious about border security by stopping weak policies that invite chaos and turn every state into a border state.

Last month, I joined the Indiana Sheriff's Association at the southern border. I saw how easy it is for fentanyl to pour into our communities.

I have a new report, *The Silent Epidemic: Fentanyl and Older Americans*, that highlights the growing threat synthetics pose to older adults.

We must reduce the supply of synthetic drugs, raise awareness among seniors, and improve data on synthetic drug use by seniors.

I hope this hearing will raise awareness about this threat, reduce stigma, and rethink how and why older Americans are impacted by substance use.