

# U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Joins bipartisan effort to combat fentanyl crisis

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) joined Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) to introduce legislation to bolster federal prevention and education efforts surrounding fentanyl, the deadly synthetic opioid that is increasingly being incorporated into illicit street drugs and fake prescription pills. The measure, Bruce’s Law, is named after Robert “Bruce” Snodgrass, who tragically passed away in 2021 at the age of 22 from fentanyl poisoning.

“I have heard from families across Wisconsin who have lost loved ones to fentanyl poisonings and overdoses, and we must do more to save Wisconsinites’ lives. We need to use every tool we have to combat this epidemic – stop drugs from coming into our country and communities, increase prevention and treatment efforts, and make overdose reversal drugs widely available,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “I am glad to be joining my Democratic and Republican colleagues in introducing this needed measure to provide Wisconsin communities across the state resources to proactively educate our young people on the devastating impacts of fentanyl and help save lives.”

In 2021, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) issued its first Public Safety Alert in six years, warning Americans about fake prescription pills and drugs containing meth and fentanyl, which is 50 times more powerful than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. DEA’s alert came amid a significant rise in overdoses and deaths caused by counterfeit drugs containing fentanyl.

From 2021 to 2022, synthetic opioids, primarily fentanyl, were identified in 91 percent of opioid overdose deaths and 73 percent of all drug overdose deaths in Wisconsin, according to the [Wisconsin Department of Health](#). The study also

showed the number of fentanyl overdose deaths in Wisconsin grew by 97 percent from 2019 to 2021. According to DEA, “a deadly dose of fentanyl is small enough to fit on the tip of a pencil.”

DEA has documented a dramatic increase in its seizures of pills containing illicit fentanyl. The agency seized over 9.5 million counterfeit pills across every state during 2021—more than were seized in 2019 and 2020 combined.

Bruce’s Law would:

- Authorize the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in coordination with other federal departments and agencies to conduct a public education and awareness campaign (for school-aged children, youth, parents, first responders, and providers) on the dangers of using street drugs which may be contaminated with fentanyl, the prevention of street drug abuse, including through the safe disposal of prescription medications and other safety precautions, and detection of early warning signs of addiction in school-aged children and youth.
- Authorize the Secretary of HHS to establish a Federal Interagency Working Group on Fentanyl Contamination of illegal drugs, which would include various federal agencies, including HIDTA state directors.
  - This Working Group would consult with experts at the state, tribal, and local levels, including family members of adults, school-aged children, and youth, as well as individuals in the recovery process, to identify strategies, resources, and supports to improve state, tribal, and local responses to the incidence of drug overdose by fentanyl-contaminated illegal drugs.
  - The Working Group will additionally examine all federal efforts directed towards reducing and preventing drug overdose by fentanyl-contaminated illegal drugs and make recommendations for educating middle and high school students on the dangers of street drugs contaminated by fentanyl.
- Lastly, this legislation authorizes new Community-Based Coalition Enhancement Grants to educate youth on the risks of street drugs contaminated with fentanyl. This program would allow Drug-Free Communities (DFC) Coalitions, currently run through the Office of National Drug Control Policy, to access new funding specifically to focus on the dangers of fentanyl contamination. This program is modeled after a similar enhancement program authorized in 2016.

The bipartisan legislation is also co-sponsored by Senators Dan Sullivan (R-AK) and Maggie Hassan (D-NH) and endorsed by the Partnership to End Addiction, Voices for Awareness, Facing Fentanyl, Shatterproof, Mothers Against Prescription Drug Abuse (MAPDA), CADCA, and High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA).

A one-pager on this legislation can be found [here](#).

An online version of this release is available [here](#).