

Good morning,

My name is Ashley. Today, I come before you as a recovering addict, a mother who fought through the foster care system, recovery advocate, someone who has buried several people close to me to this epidemic, and as someone who has served as an RN in a Kansas substance abuse treatment center for over 5 years.

I got clean in 2016. After getting clean and bringing my children home, I buried my dad to this disease in 2017. I had promised him that I would do 2 things: stay clean and achieve my childhood dream of becoming a nurse. So, that's exactly what I did. I found the perfect place for me inside a Kansas drug and alcohol rehabilitation center. Through the last few years of my career, I have seen into the eyes of this Fentanyl epidemic and to be honest, the word itself is scary.

Our children, our schools, our communities, OUR PEOPLE are being poisoned. When I think of this bill, I think of our communities and our children. It's a scary thought to think that one of our own children (or grandchildren) might be faced with a very difficult decision by simply attending prom or a senior party. Can you imagine being a senior in high school and one of your friends collapses and stops breathing? Can you be CERTAIN that you would know EXACTLY what to do? Would you think about it for 3-4 minutes before being able to make your decision? Now imagine that same scenario and having the rest of the marijuana you two just smoked out back together in your pocket. Would you think a little longer? I know I would like to say I wouldn't hesitate and would call 911 immediately, but I honestly can't be sure what I would've done with no education or knowledge as to what was happening. People experiencing Fentanyl poisoning don't have minutes for us to think. After 4 short minutes, the brain begins to lose oxygen, then between 4-6 minutes, the entire body shuts down causing death.

In the state of Kansas, first responders HAVE to respond to a call and be in route within 5 minutes after being radioed, but with rural counties, help can take anywhere from 5-25 minutes (and probably even longer if the weather is unsafe). Time IS of essence and we need to get to these people as quickly as possible.

One of my friends shared a story with me when we were talking about me being here today. She shared that she has been put in a similar situation before. FEAR held her back from making that call immediately and FEAR will be what continues to stop people from calling 911 and/or delaying that call if we don't pass this bill in Kansas.

The stigma behind addiction has got to take a side seat when it comes to this bill. Now, I won't get into how I feel about the stigma behind addiction today (because we all know it's there), but what I will say is that this epidemic is no longer affecting just "the typical drug addict" (whom also deserves saving), but this drug is being passed in our schools and our communities. It does not discriminate. I stand here today with and for the broken families who have lost their loved ones to this epidemic. Ones that DIDN'T deserve to die asking you to set your bias aside in order to save lives.

As a nurse in a substance abuse treatment center here in Kansas, I can tell you that I have seen firsthand that Fentanyl is now being found laced into several different drugs including marijuana. These people are not TRYING to die. We have got to start doing what we can in order to combat this epidemic, and I believe that this is the correct next step in aiding in the efforts to fight the Fentanyl epidemic in the state of Kansas.