

Date: 2/11/2025

To: Senate Ways and Means Committee

From: Andy & Rhonda Burris (Parents of Cruz Burris), 129 Hampton Ct. Lansing, KS 66043

Subj: Testimony for S.B. 101 D.A.R.E. Program

Chairwoman Baumgardner and members of the committee,

Our names are Andy and Rhonda Burris. and we come to you humbly. On January 18, 2023, my wife Rhonda and I lost our beautiful son, Nicholas Cruz Burris "Cruz," due to fentanyl poisoning.

Our testimony begins with Cruz. He was a vibrant 15-year-old boy. Like many children his age, Cruz was curious about many things in life. And with the evolution of social media platforms, including Snapchat, he decided to answer an advertisement from a local drug dealer. I define them as "predators."

As a prominent leader of his friend circle, which we coined "The Pack," Cruz thought he would venture where none of his friends have gone before. On Tuesday evening, January 17th, 2023, he planned with the drug dealer to deliver a pill to Cruz, perhaps in exchange for \$10.00. Sometime around 11 p.m., Cruz met him in front of our house to make the deal and purchase what Cruz **thought** was a Percocet pill.

As Rhonda and I slept, Cruz sat on his bed and "face-timed" a couple of his closest friends to share the experience of Cruz getting high. As Cruz ingested the pill, his friends witnessed the tragic events that came shortly after. Cruz's friends witnessed: 1) Cruz ingesting the illicit drug; 2) Cruz stopping breathing; and 3) Cruz falling to his side until his death.

Rhonda went to wake him up for school on Wednesday morning, January 18th, 2023, at 6:30 a.m. and found him dead in bed.

Rhonda and I have discussed with our children the dangers of taking drugs. including having Jaci and Cruz watch the news with us as we viewed the dangers of taking illicit pills and how people are dying in our country, including children. Fentanyl is our new pandemic. Rhonda and I thought nothing like this could ever happen to our family here in Kansas. We are now living one of our worst nightmares.

I remember the D.A.R.E. programs growing up. I remember the "Just Say No" campaign; I remember M.A.D.D.; they did influence my thought pattern as a teenager in the 80's, and I believe it can influence a child today, in a positive way.

I pray S.B. 101 gets passed in Kansas. I believe fentanyl/drug education should be our state and country's focus, and I cannot understand why it was ever discontinued as priority in our schools. If our state and country focused more on this national crisis, our beautiful boy may still be alive.

Parents must be educated as well.

Thank you for your time, and we appreciate your committee's willingness to hear our story.

Respectfully Submitted,

Andy & Rhonda Burris
Parents of Cruz Burris
Cruz4Life Foundation