

Dear Chair of the Committee,

I would like to thank you and the rest of the committee for the opportunity to share my story, because unfortunately there are too many families who share similar experiences and the numbers are growing every day.

My name is Brandy Harris, and I am not a medical professional, I am a mother from Hutchinson Ks. I am writing to voice my opinion on updating the laws surrounding fentanyl test strips. I am not here to give you statistics. You have professionals for that. I am here as a mother, a mother that has had the worst thing imaginable taken from her, a child that I created. My chance to be a grandmother someday.

My son's name is Sebastain. On 15 April 2022, Sebastain's life was cut short because he relapsed. He was 21 years young.

When Sebastain was about 13 years old, he was riding his bike to football practice when a truck hit him head on. Sebastain was prescribed pain medication as a result of this accident. This moment in time changed the trajectory of his entire life. Following were a rough few teenage years.

There was never a moment that I ever thought I had completely lost him. He was still the goofy, intelligent, loving kid he had always been. Above all else Sebastain always made sure his sister Nen was taken care of. Nen was born with a chromosomal abnormality that caused a plethora of health issues. His love for his sister was unparalleled. About a year before he passed, Sebastain, on his own accord, set up a go fund me account for his sister to help me pay for her medical procedures. Even when his addiction was at its worst, he always made time to be there for his sister and his family. Sebastain grew up in a close-knit family and that was a value he held close to him always.

Sebastain had gone to rehab and he had been clean for nearly 3 years when he relapsed. In those 3 years of recovery Sebastain had worked very hard to turn his life around and to make it a life he and his family could be proud of. He held a good job, had a loving girlfriend whom he shared a home, and had plans for their future. He had even discovered a new love for animals. Sebastain had plans; Sebastain had a future.

Unfortunately, because of fentanyl we will never get to witness the amazing things Sebastain would achieve. I know my son had plans, they included, watching his sister grow up. Getting married himself, having children, making a family. Because he had a moment of weakness, he didn't get that chance. The substance he received was tainted with fentanyl. We've all done things in our youth that were stupid. They just don't normally kill us. Something as small as a fentanyl strip potentially could have saved his life. Please give people like Sebastain, who are trying to overcome their addictions a chance to protect themselves and live.

I cannot begin to explain the hole his passing has put in our hearts and lives. He was loved by so many. If we can prevent just one mother, father or loved one from the worst phone call imaginable, isn't that worth something?

Thank you for your consideration,

Brandy Harris



