

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 14, 2023

Joseph R Biden  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

The devastating impact of the fentanyl epidemic on our communities and families cannot be overstated. We strongly request that you urge President Xi Jinping, in this week's meeting, to take decisive action in curbing the production and export of fentanyl-producing precursor chemicals from the People's Republic of China (PRC).

It is evident that the PRC plays a significant role in the production of fentanyl making its way into our country; contributing to the alarming rates of addiction and fatal overdoses across the United States. Prior to 2019, the PRC was the world's primary source of fentanyl until the substance was effectively banned. Despite the prohibition on producing fentanyl itself, pharmaceutical labs in the PRC still profit from the drug through the development and sale of precursor chemicals that are used to make fentanyl. Beyond supplying the chemicals to produce the deadly drug, businesses in the PRC are also assisting Mexican transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) in laundering the money that comes from selling the illicit drugs in the United States.

Despite many of the precursor chemicals being technically legal to sell, it is clear the PRC can do much more to adequately regulate the businesses that sell these chemicals to eager buyers. For example, responsible sellers in the chemical industry typically implement required identity checks of those who are attempting to buy their product. According to a former DEA agent, "... to sell non-listed chemicals, a good-faith seller would normally ask a buyer about the intended use of the compound and whether the buyer had the backing of a company or institution, such as a research organization or university."<sup>1</sup> It is clear PRC companies are not voluntarily inquiring about the potential nefarious uses of their products when they are selling to international buyers. As such, there is undoubtedly more oversight the PRC can be conducting to make certain these precursor chemicals do not end up in the hands of illegal drug manufacturers.

As we all understand, tackling this crisis will require a multifaceted approach, and a crucial element is holding those responsible accountable. Addressing the role of the PRC in the fentanyl trade is paramount to our collective efforts in combating this epidemic. It is our understanding it is not only a priority of the United States to minimize the PRC's involvement in the fentanyl supply chain, as even Mexico has urged President Xi to stop the flow of fentanyl.<sup>2</sup> If Mexican TCOs have a large portion of their supply chain effectively cut off by the

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<sup>1</sup> [How fentanyl ingredients cross oceans and borders | CNN](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Mexico asks China for help on fentanyl, slams US critics | Reuters](#)

PRC, it is likely we will see a drastic drop in illicit fentanyl being trafficked across our southern border and killing vulnerable Americans.

From 2020 to 2021, the number of primarily fentanyl-related deaths in the United States increased by 24.1 percent, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Approximately 26.1 out of 100,000 deaths in the United States are related to fentanyl up from 5.7 deaths per 100,000 in 2016.<sup>3</sup> With each passing day, our nation's fentanyl crisis continues to intensify, with no end in sight without prompt action from our Chinese counterparts. We strongly urge you to use this opportunity to implore President Xi to finally put an end to the manufacturing of illicit fentanyl and hold the PRC accountable for its role in contributing to the fentanyl crisis.

Thank you for your attention to this very important matter, and we look forward to your timely response and action.

Sincerely,



M. Michael Rounds  
United States Senator



Joe Manchin III  
United States Senator



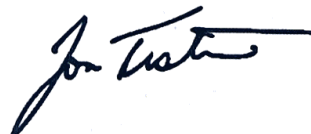
Rick Scott  
United States Senator



Angus S. King Jr.  
United States Senator



Mike Crapo  
United States Senator



Jon Tester  
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senator



Dan Sullivan  
United States Senator

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<sup>3</sup> [Estimates of Drug Overdose Deaths Involving Fentanyl, Methamphetamine, Cocaine, Heroin, and Oxycodone: United States, 2021](https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/deaths/fentanyl-methamphetamine-cocaine-heroin-oxycodone-2021)  
(cdc.gov)