



June 5, 2023

The Honorable Edward J. Markey
255 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Markey:

On behalf of the Big Cities Health Coalition ([BCHC](#)), I write in support of the introduction of the *Support, Treatment, and Overdoses Prevention of Fentanyl Overdoses Act or STOP Fentanyl Overdoses Act* (S. 1785). BCHC thanks you for your leadership in supporting public health approaches to addressing the overdose crisis in our country.

BCHC is comprised of health officials who lead 35 of the nation's largest metropolitan health departments; together they serve more than 61 million – or about one in five – Americans. Our members work every day to keep their communities healthy and safe. Big city health departments act not only to prevent and reduce harm from overdoses, but also to improve outcomes for people who use drugs. They are among the first to detect trends in emerging drugs, identify inequities in fatal and non-fatal overdoses, recognize hot spots, fund and provide supportive services designed to reduce harm to individuals who use drugs, hold systemwide convenings, and implement quality improvement initiatives. Big city health departments are also the first to identify and respond to local impacts, working to mitigate the effect of overdose and other harmful effects of substance use, including disease transmission. They pilot and test innovative strategies that are often later implemented in communities across their respective states and the country.

BCHC [supports](#) efforts to expand testing for fentanyl and related synthetic opioid substances as well as increase information sharing by public health agencies and law enforcement to identify emerging threats posed by fentanyl to prevent overdoses. BCHC has been a proponent of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) program, which now funds both state and local health departments directly. The *STOP Fentanyl Overdoses Act* builds on OD2A by authorizing grants to enhance surveillance of drug and overdose trends that can be used to inform program and policy efforts to reduce overdoses.

BCHC also support efforts to increase access to medications for opioid overdose reversal. Our member health departments continue to struggle in purchasing sufficient quantities of naloxone due to price and availability of resources. Lastly, BCHC appreciates the Good Samaritan immunity provisions in the legislation to limit civil and criminal liability for individuals who administer naloxone to persons who are experiencing an overdose. Many of our jurisdictions have standing orders and immunity from liability would be instrumental in increasing the number of people willing to carry and administer naloxone to save lives.

BCHC stands ready to work with you to reduce fentanyl-related overdoses and to assist you in gaining support for the bill. Please do not hesitate to contact me at juliano@bigcitieshealth.org if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chrissie Juliano". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chrissie Juliano, MPP
Executive Director

cc: The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
The Honorable Cory Booker
The Honorable Thomas Carper
The Honorable Ron Wyden
The Honorable Peter Welch
The Honorable Bob Menendez
The Honorable Jeff Merkley
The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
The Honorable Martin Heinrich