

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

August 30, 2024

Dear Friends,

Thank you for attending today's event marking International Overdose Awareness Day in Yakima. The critical work of organizations like Triumph, the Yakima County Health District, and so many other organizations in attendance today, helps the people of the Yakima Valley access substance use treatment for themselves, their neighbors, and their loved ones. I also want to thank the Yakima County Sheriff's Office, the Yakima City Police, and all of the law enforcement professionals who work to hold accountable those who are responsible for putting these drugs on our streets. We must continue to pursue an approach that helps those who need it while bringing to justice those who exploit illness for their personal gain.

Last year, I visited with several Yakima leaders, including Jolene Seda from Triumph, Sheriff Robert Udell, Commissioner James Shike of the Yakama Nation, and others to discuss the challenges facing health care and law enforcement professionals in combating the fentanyl crisis. I also heard from individuals with lived experience of addiction. They shared their stories of struggle and of seeking treatment. I'm reporting back to you this year to say that I heard your concerns and have led on legislative action.

This May, I introduced the Fatal Overdose Reduction Act, which would create a federal demonstration program to expand the Health Engagement Hub model nationwide, with my Republican colleague Senator Bill Cassidy. The Health Engagement Hub model was developed by a professor at the University of Washington, and it prioritizes providing near-immediate medication-assisted treatment at the community level. This innovative way of delivering treatment has been shown to decrease overdose deaths by 68%.

I also cosponsored the FEND OFF Fentanyl Act, which was signed into law last spring. That legislation declares that fentanyl is a national emergency and enables the president to impose sanctions on fentanyl traffickers. The legislation also gives the Treasury Department more tools to fight fentanyl related money laundering. As part of that work, the money seized will be directed to local law enforcement to continue the fight. I was also supportive of the Yakama Nation's request for \$1.028 million so they can launch a Fentanyl Task Force on Yakama land. The funds will be used to support efforts by Yakama Police to combat the trafficking of fentanyl in the area, which will benefit not only the tribe, but the region as a whole.

Talking about addiction is important, and events like this are helping to bring people together to find solutions. I will continue to work in Washington, DC, to share the stories I hear in Yakima and across our state with my colleagues as we continue to build towards solutions that serve those in need.

Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator