

November 30, 2023

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson:

I write to request that any supplemental funding package brought to the floor include funding to specifically address the needs at our southern border. As fentanyl-related deaths continue to climb in communities across the country, additional funding, resources, and innovative strategies are necessary to strengthen the security of our border and ports of entry.

Overdose deaths have skyrocketed in the past few years, impacting communities across our nation. In total, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that more than 112,000 people died from a drug overdose between May 2022 and May 2023, with fentanyl and other synthetic opioids causing the vast majority of overdoses.^[1] In many states, fentanyl fatalities have more than doubled in just two years, with some states increasing almost fivefold. According to a new analysis, accidental overdoses became the number one cause of death in 13 states for people under 40.^[2] Overdoses from fentanyl do not discriminate and impact every single congressional district, demanding our immediate action to combat this crisis.

The increasing rates of overdose deaths are being driven, in part, by fentanyl trafficking across our border. From FY 2019 to FY 2022, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) seizures of fentanyl nearly tripled. So far in FY 2023, CBP has already seized over 25,000 pounds of fentanyl.^[3] In March, it was reported that CBP seized more than 21 million fentanyl tablets in the Nogales, AZ port of entry over the prior five months—more than the number of tablets seized during the entire previous year.^[4] CBP data has shown that drugs are overwhelmingly being smuggled through U.S. ports of entry—particularly in Arizona and California. Our frontline personnel at the border need more resources to adequately respond to a challenge of this scale.

The Administration's supplemental funding request includes \$13.6 billion to provide resources for our law enforcement personnel to secure the southern border and stop the flow of fentanyl, as well as nearly \$850 million for CBP non-intrusive inspection systems and \$13 million for counter-fentanyl research and development. Additionally, this request includes \$1.2 billion for

^[1] <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm>

^[2] <https://www.penncapital-star.com/health-care/death-rates-for-people-under-40-have-skyrocketed-blame-fentanyl/>

^[3] <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/drug-seizure-statistics>

^[4] <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2023/03/09/united-states-arizona-border-fentanyl/>

the Department of Homeland Security and \$23 million for the Department of Justice to fund over 100 cutting-edge inspection machines and to hire an additional 1,300 border patrol agents and 1,000 law enforcement personnel with investigative capabilities. At a time of unprecedented drug seizures and unsustainable border crossings, these resources are vital.

The complex dynamics at our borders will not be fixed overnight. However, Congress now has the ability to provide significant resources to our border patrol agents and border communities.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and I look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ruben Gallego". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ruben" and last name "Gallego" clearly distinguishable.

Ruben Gallego
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

