****

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:** [Megan Taylor](mailto:Megan_Taylor@heller.senate.gov) |
| March 22, 2018 | 202-224-6244 |

**Heller Helps Introduce Bill to Crack Down on Fentanyl Traffickers**

**WASHINGTON, D.C**. – U.S. Senators Dean Heller (R-NV), Tom Cotton (R-AR), Lindsey Graham (R-SC), John Kennedy (R-LA), Bill Cassidy M.D. (R-LA), and Ben Sasse (R-NE) today introduced legislation to fight the opioid epidemic by strengthening penalties for fentanyl distribution and trafficking to ensure they better reflect the serious nature of the crime.  
  
Fentanyl is 100 times more powerful than morphine and has played an outsized role in the opioid epidemic.  
  
“Potent, cheap, and deadly, fentanyl is destroying families in Nevada and across the country,” **said Heller.** “This terrifying opioid – lethal in the amount of just a few grains of sand – is being laced with other drugs like heroin and killing Americans at an alarming rate. Our bill is a two-pronged approach to end this crisis and crack down on fentanyl-related crimes. The legislation implements tougher penalties for dealers while also providing critical federal funds to assist with interdiction efforts. I’m pleased to work with Senators Cotton, Graham, Kennedy, Cassidy and Sasse on this bill and look forward to pushing it through Congress.”

“Fentanyl is one of the most dangerous drugs there is. It killed more than 20,000 Americans last year and has been a driving force behind the opioid crisis in the United States. But while the epidemic has spiraled, our drug laws have been stuck in the past. This bill will make sure, when it comes to opioid distribution and trafficking, the punishment fits the crime,” **said Senator Cotton**.  
  
“Fentanyl is one of the most deadly drugs on the market and I look forward to working with Senators Cotton, Kennedy, Cassidy, Heller, and Sasse to substantially increase penalties for those who traffic this horrific drug,” **said Senator Graham**. “I'll also be working with Senator Cotton and others to explore the possibility of even stronger penalties-that could include the death penalty if the fentanyl results in someone's death-for those who choose to push this deadly drug into our communities. Increasing these mandatory minimums is well-justified.”  
  
“Fentanyl is an incredibly powerful drug. If you are trafficking this deadly drug, you ought to be punished to the full extent of the law. You aren't going to motivate dealers and traffickers by pleading to their conscience. They know how deadly it is, and they just don't care. Too many men and women have died as a result of fentanyl; it needs to stop,” **said Senator Kennedy**. “I am proud to be a part of this important effort."

“Drug traffickers take lives and get away with a slap on the wrist,” **said Dr. Cassidy**. “This bill ensures those who traffic and deal fentanyl pay a higher price.”   
  
“The opioid crisis is a symptom of America's loneliness crisis,” **said Senator Sasse**. “On the demand side, addiction is something that’s tackled best by our families, neighbors, and communities. But, on the supply side, Congress has an important opportunity to crack down on the low-life traffickers who are ripping our communities apart. Modernizing our fentanyl sentencing laws just makes sense.”

**Background**

* This bill will reduce the amount of fentanyl and its analogues required for mandatory sentencing minimums to apply in distribution cases.

1.      20 grams substance containing fentanyl = 10+ years (changes current amount of 400 grams)

2.      5 grams substance containing fentanyl analogue = 10+ years (changes current amount of 100 grams)

3.      2 grams substance containing fentanyl = 5+ years (changes current amount of 40 grams)

4.      .5 grams substance containing fentanyl analogue = 5+ years (changes current amount of 10 grams)

* It will also provide resources to the Post Office to stop shipments of fentanyl and other synthetic opioids arriving from overseas.

###