

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell
Spokane Fentanyl Roundtable

July 31st, 2023

Sen. Cantwell Remarks

[\[AUDIO\]](#)

Sen. Cantwell: [...] We need both native and non-native people, so I certainly appreciate that. And thank you to everybody who's participating in today's roundtable to discuss about how fentanyl is impacting not just this community, but our state overall.

We've been on a listening tour throughout our state trying to think of the best ways to work together collectively, across many different organizations to fight what is, I think, a national crisis in our country. And it's been very illuminating everywhere we've been.

We've [seen] unbelievable efforts by people in communities to try to make a difference on this issue. So, I look forward to hearing specifically what Spokane's take on this situation is, and what Spokane thinks we need to do.

I know that 147 people died from fentanyl-related causes in Spokane County in 2022. And that there was a 425% increase in [fentanyl-related] overdose deaths in Spokane County from 2020 to 2022. So we're seeing an increase, obviously, as we are in other parts of our state and nation, and we want to do everything we can to address the crisis.

So we've talked about everything from treatment to recovery, to first responders, and just this past week in Washington, D.C., we were able to pass out of the Senate, what is called the FEND [Off Fentanyl] Act. And the FEND Act was about trying to basically stop the flow of the fentanyl product in our country.

We've heard from DEA and law enforcement officials about the unbelievable trafficking of this product and the volume. Volume that is now coming into our state [...]

And so this FEND Off Fentanyl Act is about bringing new tools to sanction and stop the trafficking of this product and to work collectively with our Department of Treasury and DEA to not only to be able to go after the cartels, but to go after the money laundering organizations that help launder the money that allows them to keep in operation. So we hope that we can work collectively with a bunch of people on that.

That's only one element of the problem, but given the volume of increase that we've seen, we think it's an important tool, we hope that that will get passed by the House of Representatives and get on to the President's desk.

But we've heard also about some of the tools that the community needs, both in the treatment side-- number of beds, always an issue -- and figuring out how to get more flexibility about the number of beds available, immediate treatment -- big, large theme that we're hearing from everybody, we need immediate treatment.

There is an innovative program that, on the west side, people have established that is kind of a, similar to the [Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic] model where people can just walk in and

immediately get treatment and that is something that they've discussed. Maybe we need to grow that more and support it more on, you know, a broader basis to just kind of build capacity. You know, how do you build more immediate capacity to get people into treatment immediately?

And obviously, we've heard some unbelievable stories from people who've been impacted. Personally, I'm sure we'll hear more again today.

There was a mother who came to our event in Snohomish County whose son came over here to go to school and that was it. That was the last time she saw him. He had no idea that this product that, you know, that somebody had given to him that had had potency that had that effect, and he was found dead in his dorm room.

And so the tragedy that it is causing on so many families is because people don't even know what's in this. We met another woman whose son took what he thought was Percocet only to be killed by this overdose of fentanyl.

So we're here to listen, we're here to get ideas about how Spokane wants to deal with this problem. And we thank all of you for participating.