

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

September 27, 2023

The Honorable Brian Schatz
Chairman
U.S. Senate Indian Affairs Committee
838 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Vice Chair
U.S. Senate Indian Affairs Committee
838 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chair Murkowski,

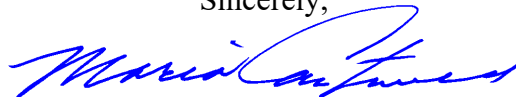
I write to respectfully request that the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs hold an oversight hearing to examine how the fentanyl crisis, a national emergency that has affected every part of our country, has been particularly devastating for Indian Country.

In 2022, the Centers for Disease Control reported that American Indians and Alaska Natives had the highest drug overdose rates in both 2020 and 2021. Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders experienced the largest percentage increases in drug overdose death rates from 2020 through 2021, with rates increasing by 47%. An increased presence of fentanyl in the illicit drug supply is a primary contributor to this deadly problem. In 2022, it was found that fentanyl played a role in 65% of overdose deaths nationwide. This month, the Lummi Nation – which took a leadership role in organizing a statewide summit in Washington – lost five Tribal members in a week to suspected fentanyl overdose deaths and sadly the Lummi Nation is not alone. Native communities throughout the country continue to experience disproportionate increases in overdose deaths despite significant efforts to prevent and treat drug addiction and overdoses in their communities.

American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians are on the front lines of a deadly fentanyl epidemic and are suffering. As a member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, I believe we have a duty to Indian Country to examine this crisis and work with Tribes to save lives in their communities.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

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