

Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today.

My son, Ethan Bherwani, was a wonderful and enormously gifted child, and at age 22, died of a fentanyl overdose, in the middle of a crowded casino floor in Connecticut almost three years ago. He had just graduated college and was celebrating with his friends before going to law school and someone he met for the first time gave him something that had a lethal dose of fentanyl in it.

Ethan collapsed and his body was without oxygen for about fifteen minutes. That's what a small dose of fentanyl does – it sends a signal to the brain that stops the respiratory system.

If Narcan, or naloxone, the generic version of Narcan, was available and administered to him, he would be alive today. In the United States, fentanyl is the leading killer of adults 18-49 years old and about 80,000 people a year are dying from it, and in about half the cases, someone is there with them who could've helped if they had access to Narcan/naloxone. 80,000 people per year is a greater than the total number of Americans we lost in the Vietnam War – just to put it in perspective.

There is enough fentanyl in this country to kill every American many times over, and more is coming in through a porous land border with Mexico and through mail packages. Imagine a Boeing 737 plane crashing every day of the year with everyone on board dying – this is how widescale the tragedy is.

On the day of his funeral, I launched Pre-Clivity, a non-profit organization whose goal is to reduce fentanyl overdoses deaths.

One day, Terry Lierman, who is a close friend, and I were together, and we talked about the idea of using the existing infrastructure of AED boxes, which contain heart defibrillators, and putting Narcan/naloxone in them as a relatively inexpensive and effective way of making sure Narcan/naloxone is available when and where it is needed. Terry and I then spoke together with Senator Smith and the idea took hold. I want to thank them both publicly – without them there would be no bill to discuss.

The bill proposed today will make great strides in lower the fentanyl deaths because it will make Narcan/naloxone much more readily available. Narcan/naloxone reverses the signal and people start breathing again before they die due to irreversible damage is done to the brain. It has a four-year shelf life, and there are no harmful effects if applied to someone who did not have a fentanyl overdose. In short, it is a miracle of modern medicine.

I hope this bill passes and become law. The world has lost the impact that Ethan would have had on the world and every day, we continue lose people who also would have had a meaningful impact. Fentanyl doesn't discriminate – all races, all genders, all neighborhoods and all socio-economic classes are being impacted. We have a chance here today to make a material difference and reverse this tragic trend – so that the next Ethan is here and smiling with us instead of us mourning the senseless loss of life.

Thank you for your time today.