

Dear Maryland Assembly,

I have lost friends to substance abuse. Most were from liver cirrhosis as a complication of alcoholism, one was a fellow Army officer and veterinarian who overdosed on ketamine while deployed to Iraq together, and one was a family friend who overdosed on heroin. My understanding of the devastating effects of substance abuse may be grounded in significant scientific background, but that can never explain the emotional toll and senseless vacuum left in the loss of a loved one. I am grateful to have never lost a child or other immediate family member and cannot fathom that level of grief. I can only empathize as best as anyone with only tangential experiences can muster.

From the scientific standpoint, I have a DVM (Doctor of Veterinary Medicine) from University of Minnesota (1996), PhD in Comparative Biomedical Sciences (Pharmacology) from North Carolina State University (2005), and board certification in the American College of Veterinary Preventive Medicine (2013), a specialty that focuses on five core areas: Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Infectious and Parasitic Diseases, Environmental Health and Toxicology, Public Health Administration and Education, and Food Protection. In both clinical and in zoologic medicine, I have judiciously prescribed opioids, including fentanyl, and other controlled substances. With 27 years in clinical medicine and research, I have a deep appreciation for the impact of drugs and toxins at the cellular, tissue, organ, system, and organism levels.

I also retired from the United States Army as a Lieutenant Colonel with 20 years of active-duty service, including a 2007 Iraq War deployment and TS/SCI clearance. My subject matter expertise, including laboratory research, leadership, and policy, was exclusively in the medical chemical and biological defense arena, directly pertinent to the fentanyl crisis. My relevant positions included Co-Executive Secretary of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction as the Deputy Medical Director for the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Chemical and Biological Defense, Director of Research Programs for Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, Deputy Commander for U.S. Army Center for Environmental Health Research, Deputy Director for Grants Management for Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs, and S3 (Chief of Operations and Plans) and Deputy Division Chief for Analytical Toxicology Division at U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense.

Make no mistake, chemical warfare is being waged on us, on our children. Our adversaries, particularly China, are capitalizing on our porous border to facilitate trafficking, just as they are trafficking in persons and weapons, and emboldened gangs like MS-13. Emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases, including measles, whooping cough, tuberculosis, and leprosy, are likewise making their way across our southern border, and our overburdened health care, education, and criminal justice systems cannot handle the influx, as every state is now a border state. National security lessons learned from COVID-19 were never applied to our common biological and chemical defense as it pertains to illegal immigration.

Recent legalization of marijuana, demoralization and disrespect of law enforcement, and lax prosecution have further exacerbated an untenable situation for gateway abuse, a dumbing down of a pacified populace, and a slippery slope for decriminalization of harder drugs. Of course, the War on Drugs was never victorious because it was never successfully waged. As King Aragorn stated in *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, "Open war is upon you, whether you would risk it or not." The War on Drugs has been circumvented by our own government, encouraged by pharma, enabled by lazy and irresponsible physicians, and now actively dismissed by a woke agenda that prioritizes Diversity Equity and Inclusion concerns over law and order. For a generation that claims to be driven to "follow the science," I pray that the sanity of this legislation, grounded in both science and national security, will prevail. As a father, I pray for the future of my three children. The distributors of fentanyl and other deadly poisons are the final, if not the most culpable and personal, accomplices in a war that began on the other side of the world and ends in murder.

v/r

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