

- Thank you, Senator Grassley. Stopping the flow of poisons, like fentanyl and methamphetamine, into our communities remains one of our highest law enforcement priorities. Those that claim that drug trafficking is a non-violent offense ignore the grim reality of addiction and the overdose deaths plaguing Iowa. As a drug prosecutor for over 15 years and now as the Commissioner of the Iowa Department of Public Safety, I have heard time and again from suffering individuals that they would not wish their addiction on their worst enemy. I have had folks tell me that recovering from a gunshot wound is far easier than recovering from an opioid addiction. The influx of fentanyl coming into Iowa is touching every corner of our state. Both urban and rural communities are reeling especially as these highly addictive and deadly opioids are being mass marketed and falsely branded as prescription pain medications like Percocet or OxyContin.
- Even though Iowa maintains one of the nation's lowest drug overdose death rates, ranking 46th among all states... we're still experiencing the same trend that's playing out across the country. The Iowa

Department of Health and Human Services reports a 34% increase in drug overdose deaths since 2019... rising from 350 total deaths to 470. This includes a 64% increase in overdose deaths caused by opioids... and a 120% increase in drug overdose deaths involving young Iowans under the age of 25. Last year, illicit fentanyl was implicated in 83% of all Iowa opioid-related overdose deaths... compared to 31% just five years prior.

- The volume of fentanyl being seized by law enforcement throughout Iowa is **shocking** even to the most veteran narcotics agents and drug chemists. To be frank, I'm surprised our overdose deaths are not higher. To put that concern into context ... In all of 2021, the DCI's Criminalistics Laboratory analyzed 17,163 fentanyl pills disguised as prescription drugs. In the first nine months of 2022, that number has grown fivefold to 92,635— let me repeat that – 92,635 fentanyl pills disguised as prescription drugs. Seizures of powder-based fentanyl is also skyrocketing as we have seized 22,735 grams of powdered

fentanyl, three times as much as last year. The seizures keep piling up and there is little sign of it stopping.

- As you can see, the fentanyl problem is real, it's in our neighborhoods, it's affordable and plentiful, and there are irreversible consequences for unsuspecting Iowans.
- Drug traffickers predominately from Mexico are using makeshift pill mills to turn fentanyl powder into pills that have the color and markings of prescription drugs. As you can see from the photos here today, the pill presses used by the cartels can create nearly flawless reproductions of common prescription drugs. As of late, the cartels have now taken to targeting children with brightly-colored variations that appear like candy. Just a few weeks ago, Des Moines Metro officers seized 150 multi-colored pills that were found to contain methamphetamine. If our seasoned narcotics agents and drug chemists cannot immediately tell the difference, our children certainly shouldn't be expected to.

- According to the Drug Enforcement Administration, two (2) milligrams of fentanyl can be lethal depending on body size and tolerance. For comparison purposes, the tiny granules you see on the lead of the No. 2 pencil in the photo to my right represents a lethal dose and can stop a beating heart.
- The Drug Enforcement Administration has found that 4 out of every 10 counterfeit pills submitted to their lab contains a lethal dose. If we apply that data point to Iowa, more than 37,000 lethal fentanyl pills have been seized this year alone. We are truly to the point that anyone choosing to take one of these pills is playing a deadly game of Russian Roulette.
- Here in Iowa, law enforcement is intensifying its efforts to dismantle fentanyl trafficking networks using data-driven strategies to identify and address problem areas across the state. We are using intelligence information, reports from law enforcement, and public health information to drive our enforcement efforts.

- In late 2020 for example, our narcotics investigators began working with multiple agencies, including the Tri-County Drug Task Force, to investigate a drug trafficking organization operating in the Northern District of Iowa with ties to Mexico.

After a months-long investigation, law enforcement obtained a search warrant for a home located in Waterloo. While searching that residence, officers found over 90 pounds of methamphetamine, 23 pounds of fentanyl, approximately 40,000 tablets containing a mixture of fentanyl and tramadol and 6,000 pure fentanyl tablets behind a false wall in the basement.

- To date, 14 individuals have been indicted for federal drug-related crimes, and 10 individuals have been charged with state-level money laundering and drug-related offenses.
- Another example of our strategy to dismantle fentanyl trafficking networks can be seen in the recent federal indictment of six Cass County residents for conspiracy to distribute fentanyl after a series of overdoses rocked rural Cass and Shelby Counties.

- In the span of just a few months, those two small, rural counties had five fentanyl overdoses, two of which were fatal. Agents further learned that the distribution of Naloxone in those two counties had risen sharply. Once the size and scope of the problem had been identified state, federal, and local law enforcement from both Iowa and Nebraska initiated a proactive and targeted investigation designed to root out the source of these overdoses. It took six months of diligence and hard work but the efforts of law enforcement paid off in June of this year when a grand jury handed down six federal indictments.
- It is my sincere hope that after hearing from everyone today, Iowans and our elected officials will have a greater understanding and appreciation for the pervasiveness and dangers of fentanyl, and how law enforcement is doing all we can to stop this epidemic.

Thank you.