**Senator Grassley Opening Remarks
Senate Drug Caucus Hearing**

**“Oversight of the Office of National Drug Control Policy and its 2022 National Drug Control Strategy”**

**June 15, 2022**

Today's hearing will examine the Office of the National Drug Control Policy's coordination of national drug control efforts, and preliminary reviews of the Drug Control Strategy by the government watchdog, GAO.

ONDCP was created to serve as our nation's leader in combatting drugs. Since its inception in 1989, the threats posed by drugs have evolved. But the mission of ONDCP and of this Drug Caucus remains the same: **to** **save lives**.

This hearing comes at a critical juncture for our nation. We’re in the middle of the most destructive and challenging drug environment this country has ever seen.

By now we’ve all seen the numbers. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reported that nearly 108,000 Americans died last year from a drug overdose.

This is staggering. This is unacceptable.

Iowa’s no stranger to the drug crisis. Our towns and communities have been hit hard by the impact of lethal drugs. This includes meth, fentanyl, and now the spread of deadly counterfeit pills.

Fentanyl overdoses have become the **number one** cause of death among US adults, ages 18-45. Overdose deaths from methamphetamine have **tripled** in recent years according to the National Institutes of Health.

Common sense tells us that we need ONDCP to lead efforts and steer a national strategy that makes it harder to obtain and use fentanyl and its analogues, meth, synthetic opioids and other drugs.

We need to be focused on stopping the spread of these drugs. But I think ONDCP's 2022 Strategy could do better at that.

The strategy doesn’t put enough emphasis on scheduling fentanyl analogues permanently. Also, tackling counterfeit pills laced with fentanyl and meth is hardly even mentioned in the strategy. I’m concerned that the strategy's emphasis on harm reduction could allow for an even greater use of drugs. I’m also concerned that the strategy notes that ONDCP will take a review of where mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses should be eliminated.

This guiding document sets the tone for how our nation perceives drug policy and calls our federal and state partners to action. I’m worried that making drugs more accessible is what this Administration calls "drug control.”

I’d prefer if the Strategy focused on the most lethal drugs facing us. We need to make it harder to get and use drugs, and find areas where we can get real work done. I have a few ideas on that.

The permanent scheduling of all fentanyl related substances is a start. ONDCP has supported class wide scheduling of fentanyl analogues, and I hope that’s still the case.

Second, *The Methamphetamine Response Act* that I introduced with Senator Feinstein was signed into law, and I look forward to working with ONDCP on its implementation.

Also, Congress can continue supporting prevention efforts, like educating parents and children to stop access and use of drugs.

But there’s more work to be done. I look forward to hearing from ONDCP Director Gupta today and discussing how we can work together to turn the tide.

Thank you again to our witnesses for being here today and I look forward to your testimony.