

Chairman Feinstein, Co-Chairman Grassley and Members of the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control, I am very humbled to be asked to testify to you today on behalf of my family and the many families whose lives have been affected by these very dangerous drugs. I am also very honored, and David would have been as well, that you have asked to name this legislation after him. My testimony today is one of a family who was living the American Dream. David had just graduated from high school on May 29, 2010 and would be attending the University of Northern Iowa that fall, the alma mater of Co-Chairman Grassley. We were so proud of him and all he had accomplished. Yet suddenly out of nowhere our lives were tragically changed forever.

On Sunday June 6, 2010, a week to the day after his graduation, and 10 months ago today, David took his own life. I will never forget the frantic call from my wife Jan as my younger son Daniel and I fished at a friends farm pond. The 30-minute trip home was the longest most frightening drive of our lives, praying that God would somehow work a miracle in our lives but it was not to be.

None of this made any sense to us at the time. As we looked at David we saw no signs of depression much less suicide. What terrible parents we were to be so out of touch with our own son to not see this. There was no note, no texts, no emails, nothing we saw that gave any indication David planned to take his own life. The following morning we spent 4-5 hours with his girlfriend's family. David had just spent most of the weekend with Carrie and her family at her graduation party. They were just as dumbfounded as we were and knew this was totally out of David's character.

The following afternoon Carrie got together with a few of David's friends to get some answers. She knew something wasn't right and the boys eventually confessed they had smoked something called K2. After learning this she talked to her mother and then came to talk to us. At about 4 p.m. Tuesday, Carrie explained to us that according to the boys this was "fake" marijuana. She had never heard of it before and neither had we. That evening we met with the families involved and started the process of learning what this really was and how it affected our son.

By Wednesday morning we started to see the severe consequences to some that had used K2. We learned that some of our neighboring states were already talking of outlawing K2 and that several countries had already seen the grave consequences and had outlawed K2 or the more popular compounds in K2. We were in shock and grieving but also we knew we needed to do something. We were told that this was an issue that needed a voice and we agreed to help be that voice, not really understanding what that meant, and certainly never thinking it would bring us here today.

We made our first public announcement of what had happened and the dangers of K2 at David's funeral. We had a church filled to capacity with upwards of 1,000 people, some sitting on the floor in the isles. Even though we and our family and friends needed to mourn our great loss, we felt burdened to talk to the young people about David's mistake. We also needed to inform the parents of what K2 was.

Since that day we have done seemingly countless local and national interviews, radio, print, television, newsmagazines, the internet, as well as public service announcements all in the hopes of increasing awareness of these drugs. We have helped start a new local drug prevention organization called Standing Together On Prevention, or STOP. Recently we began giving talks to local schools, churches, and clubs as well as fire fighters and EMS providers.

In our search for information on these drugs most of what we found were people trying to sell us K2 and other drugs like salvia divinorum. Most of the drug prevention and information websites we visited did not even mention K2. We knew we couldn't be the only family looking for answers and decided to start our own website www.k2drugfacts.com. Since starting this site almost 8 months ago we have had over 71,000 hits and have received hundreds of emails from families and individuals sharing their terrible experiences with this drug. One day after a story on Yahoo Sports we received 104 emails. The newest threat to add to the list of K2 and salvia is a new designer drug referred to as bath salts. These bath salts are not what you might put in your bath water but purposely marketed as such to get around the law and confuse. Bath salts are synthetic cocaine and are smoked, snorted or injected. Numerous lives have already been lost to this new drug and I hope you have both bath salts and salvia on your radar.

It was largely through contacts we made through our website that we started to really see and understand what this drug had done to our son. The young men who smoked this drug with David report that within a few minutes of smoking the drug David began to get extremely agitated. They thought he needed some fresh air and took him outside and went across the street to a park where they walked around hoping he would calm down. David started talking about feeling like he was in hell and generally not making a lot of sense. After 30 minutes or so he seemed to start calming down and said he was tired. The other boys were hungry and wanted to get something to eat but David said he was going to go home and take a nap. They were going to meet up again that night and attend a few graduation parties. Unfortunately after coming home David continued to be terrorized by the drug and shot himself.

As we have learned more about K2 we have found a consistent theme of people feeling like they are being chased by the devil or feeling like they are in hell. Even one report of a young man saying he was God and held his family captive for 36 hours. There are also many reports of suicidal or homicidal thoughts and fears they would have taken their own life or hurt others had it not been for their friends or family. Some do not go into that great of detail and simply call it the worse experience of their lives.

We have also learned more about how these drugs affect you physically. Elevated heart rates in excess of 180 BPM while resting, extreme blood pressure, vomiting followed by dry heaves that can last for hours, blackouts and seizures are also very common. We know now that David was tortured both mentally and physically before he died. This drug puts you in a place where you will do anything to escape it and reality means nothing.

We are also hearing increasing accounts of people who are feeling the effects of these drugs several days and even weeks or months later. There seems to be growing evidence that some of these affects may be permanent. We are also hearing more cases of people having what I would call flash backs after having no contact with the drugs. People afraid of the dark, afraid to leave their home, not able to go back to school and not able to maintain jobs.

These drugs are marketed under false pretenses to skirt our laws and confuse the public. When we think of something as being "fake" we think of something being inferior. When we think of something as legal we think it must be safe. I submit to you that this "fake" marijuana and "fake" cocaine are anything but inferior in strength and anything but safe. I have attached several first hand accounts we have received through our website. We use these testimonials to inform those seeking information of the real dangers of these drugs and hopefully make those thinking of possibly using them to reconsider.

In closing I want to thank you again for inviting me here and listening. I also want to personally thank Senator Grassley for taking the time to listen to us last summer and for sharing David's story on the floor of the US Senate. But as much as I appreciate your asking me here today, the message I want to leave you with is we are not doing enough, and we are not moving quickly enough. The people knowingly and deceptively poisoning our youth will seemingly stop at nothing for their own financial gain. They are ahead of us and it is imperative we enact comprehensive legislation to ban not only K2, but also bath salts and salvia.

Statically speaking this was not supposed to happen to us. We talked to our sons numerous times about not using drugs, no texting and driving, no drinking until you are 21 and certainly no drinking and driving. It never occurred to us to talk to our sons of things we had never heard. Our message now as we speak to young people is simple. Do not inhale, do not inject, and do not ingest anything. I hope you will join us in getting this message out and that you will move quickly to get these poisons out of our communities.